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## CONTENTS

### GENERAL GAMES

#### 6 REVIEWS

Including *Full Metal Planete*, *Traber Derby*, *Favoriten*, and *À La Carte*.

#### 12 CHRISTMAS CHOICE

We asked our writers to choose four games to play with their non gaming friends over Christmas, and also invited some younger members of the family to air their views on some of the recent offerings.

#### 16 OLD BONES, NEW BODIES

*Bruce Whitehill*, the Big Game Hunter, takes a nostalgic look at the history of the American board game.

#### 22 ESSEN SPIEL '89

The world's greatest game convention still shows the way. Reports from *Brian Walker* and *Mike Siggins*.

#### 26 THE GI INTERVIEW

Essen provided an opportunity for *Brian Walker* to catch up with *Sid Sackson*, designer of a veritable gamut of classic games.

#### 30 READERS' REVENGE

The first GI reader survey. We're quaking in our boots already.

### WARGAMES

#### 36 STORYBOARD GAME

How do you put together a wargame to suit your own tastes? *Charles Vasey* explains how he designed *The King's War*.

#### 38 BEATING THE ODDS

*Ralf Kahlert* provides some statistics with which to fine tune your strategy in *Britannia*.

### ROLEGAMES

#### 40 REVIEWS

Including *SpaceMaster* and *GURPS Supers* supplements.

#### 44 CITIES FEATURE, PART 3

Our team of reviewers take a comprehensive look at the city products you might want to use in your campaign.

### COMPUTER GAMES

#### 48 REVIEWS

Including *Omega*, *Shogun*, *Lords of the Rising Sun* and *Go-moku*.

## REGULARS

18 R.I.P  
Warlord/Apocalypse.

20 THE GAMES  
CLINIC  
Variants for *Formel Eins*,  
*Schoko & Co* and  
*Indiscretion*.

28 DESERT ISLAND  
GAMES  
This month – *George  
Crawshay*.

32 SNIPER  
International gaming gossip

34 NEWS

47 ROLE CALL  
Rolegame odds and ends.

56 REBOUND  
The readers write.

57 CLASSIFIEDS  
Free listing of clubs,  
conventions and small ads.



# UPFRONT

As Mike Siggins noted in his Essen report, German women seem to have an entirely different attitude to games playing than their English and American counterparts. That is, they play them. Here it seems they are content, for the most part, to sit passively watching their menfolk at play, or divorce themselves from the proceedings altogether. Quite why this should be so we know not, but we can speculate like many other before us.

Perhaps the most bizarre speculator was the one addressing a seminar on games that I was attending. His speculation was that women were 'no good at games' because they lacked 'spatial awareness'. To 'prove' his theory he cited their 'inability to park properly'. This thinly veiled assertion of male superiority crumbled somewhat when I pointed out the the winner of last years World Backgammon Championship was a women (Lee Genu). Perhaps one reason though by no means the only one, may lie in the type of games we are producing. It's hard to see women identifying with the crypto-fascist iconography of Warhammer 40K, or imagining themselves as a Panzer leader

somewhere west of Gaza. Snigger you may, but identification with the subject matter is one the joys of games playing.

Role-playing would seem, because of its primarily non-competitive style, ideally suited to women of imagination. Unfortunately the damsel-in-distress sexist nature of many of the games put women off at the outset. Compounding this attitude are the role-playing magazines, who seem only too happy to print lurid pictures of helpless femles just waiting to be rescued by a male hunk (in reality, a nerd in National Health specs). The last issue of *GM* looked as though they were making a play for the bondage market, as it depicted two full page shots of something called Elvira, bound to a tree (is it sexist to confess I felt like setting light to it?). If women don't like our hobby games then what of our family games? These now seems to consist mostly of asking questions on general knowledge, or of a rather more personal nature. Either way, the answer is the same: embarrassment. Why engage in an activity where your lack of trivia recall, or refusal to answer intimate questions, will be taken as a sign of the innate inferiority of your gender? Until we can produce games that appeal positively to women why should we expect them to play them?

It's Christmas, and this has been your chestnut. Have a good one. **GI**

## GRIM NEWS

Games players, like many hobbyists, tend to be obsessives. They will buy anything connected with their hobby. Some even buy *GRiM* (*Games Review Monthly*). It is for this reason that we feel obliged to print the following letter, which was sent in response to a series of libellous editorials about ourselves, and *GM* magazine, which suggested we were both on the verge of folding.

Our policy is not to sue fellow journalists. *GM*, as is their right, took a different line. Their solicitor threatened to issue a writ unless an apology was forthcoming. This was agreed to and should have appeared in *GRiM*'s December issue. Needless to say, it didn't. Neither did our letter. Even given the standards of today's national press, this is an appalling state of affairs. Even we didn't expect *GRiM* to bypass the gutter completely, but it appears they are intent on charting new subterranean depths.

To: *Games Review Monthly*

Sirs,

The editorial in your last issue contained a number of factual errors which I think ought to be corrected.

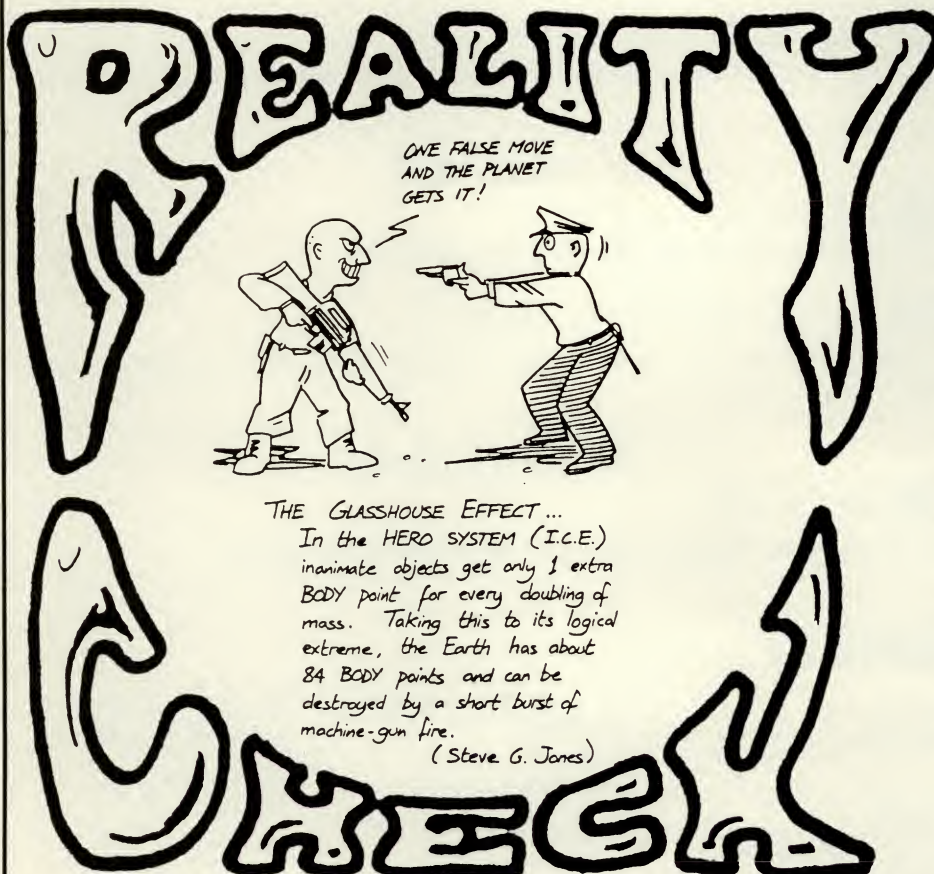
At no time did we ever promise readers an 'additional 16-page colour section on computer games', as you allege. What we did say was that we would be adding internal colour, and *eight* more pages, 'to enable us to cover computer games and extend our coverage of general games'. In the event, *six*, not five as you stated, of these eight pages were given over to computer games. There was no question of anything being 'whittled down' as you put it.

As you are so fond of providing interminable replies to letters, perhaps for once you could provide a useful service and inform both myself, and your readers, just where you obtained this erroneous information.

To respond to the rest of your comments concerning my magazine would be to confer a dignity on them that would be wholly unwarranted.

**Brian Walker**  
Editor, *Games International*

PS What has happened to *Games Trade Monthly*, the paper you took over several months ago and which has not been seen since?





## ISSUE ELEVEN

Were it not for the fact that it is now such an overused prefix, we would call this our 'designer' issue. Certainly the feature on Sid Sackson, and the 'design notes' piece by Charles Vasey would justify such a tag. You could also say that we really live up to the international in our title, with games from Germany, France, America, and Australia, all coming under the microscope. Why, there's even a couple from the UK.

'Allo, 'allo, our Game of the Month accolade goes to **Full Metal Planete** from France, to whom we must say *merci* for such a fine product. All the fun of the fair too from Essen, with several excellent finds like **Favoriten**, **Traber Derby**, and **À La Carte**, all getting favourable reviews. For those of you who have never managed to make it to the world's premier gaming event, Mike Siggins provides you with a 'first time caller' report.

Not much happening on the wargames front this month, but Ralf Kahlert chips in with a number crunching **Britannia** piece.

Paul Mason round up the feature on cities (still no mention of Birmingham, though) while the seemingly endless GURPS supplements get the once over.

Some fascinating stuff over in the 16-bit section this month, with **Sim City** proving the cream of the crop. Elsewhere John Harrington experiences a big bang in more ways than one. Shortly after playing the game of that name John was due to get married. Let's hope his bride-to-be isn't too blown away. **Sportif** all-rounder Mike Siggins pops up again with **Basketball**, while ashen faced Charlton supporter Mike Woodhouse wisely leaves the planet for a **Stellar Crusade**. The big 'O' (for Orient) gets heavy coverage too, with **Lords of the Rising Sun**, **Shogun**, and that ancient classic **Go**, all receiving in-depth coverage. With regard to the latter, Steve Nichols proves that humans have still got the edge in the Man vs Machine debate.

So that's it. The designer issue, the international issue, call it what you will. We like it.

## Star Ratings

\*\*\*\*\*

Top class game. Highly recommended

\*\*\*\*

Very good game. Worth buying

\*\*\*

Worth a look

\*\*

Only if the subject interests you



A true turkey

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## REVIEWS

## GENERAL GAMES

# GAME OF THE MONTH

## FULL METAL PLANETE

DESIGNED BY  
DELFANTI, MATHIEU AND  
TRIGAUD

PUBLISHED BY  
LUDODELIRE

PRICE £32.95

\*\*\*\*

**Full Metal Planete** is a recent French production which has some of the best components I have seen and which also happens to be a fine little 2-4 player game. It is, however, hard to describe into which box **Full Metal Planete** falls. It is part wargame, part science fiction epic and there are some abstract, chess-like features thrown in for good measure.

### THE KILLING FLOODS

The plot of the game is pretty unusual. Play takes place on an alien planet where there are limited supplies of a useful mineral – these just lie around on the surface waiting to be picked up. The planetary surface consists of mountains, flatlands, marshes, reefs, islands and

quite a lot of water. The central sea is tidal which can make certain hexes impassable and this aspect plays an important part in the game. Each player is assumed to land his space station, which is full of useful mining and combat hardware, and his aim is to grab as many rocks as possible before launching again at the end of the game. In the time the space stations are on planet, it is possible to mine away quietly or to process some of the rocks to make more units with which to attack your rivals.

All of the pieces are supplied as metal castings, hence the name of the game. The castings are good enough without worrying about top quality moulding. The tidal cards and rules are all well produced and the box is a luxury item. The rocks are small pieces of real granite (or similar) and they look great. My only gripe is that the map, while graphically excellent, is made of fairly thin cardstock which really isn't in keeping with the high standards of the rest of the game. Although the game isn't inexpensive, the metal pieces make it a very attractive purchase.

### PONTOON

Play starts by placing the *astronefs* (space stations) within their designated zones which prevent players being too close. The first kicker is that your turn is timed by another player and you only have three minutes to do everything. This means it is wise to do your planning while the other players are moving as three minutes disappears surprisingly quickly. Your choice now is how to use the fifteen action points allowed each turn. These can be saved up but most of the time you will need them and more.

The movement rules are very simple. Each unit moving one hex costs one action point, two if in mountains. If you are moving a fully loaded *barge* or *crabe*, this still only costs one point. It costs one to pick up a rock and one to process it in the *Pondeuse* (literally a 'good layer' – the piece which allows you to build units and predict tides). You can use all fifteen action points on one piece or spread them around as much as you wish. That's it.

Combat is a little more difficult, but still clean and simple. To destroy an enemy piece, it is necessary to 'pin' it using the firepower of any two *destrueteurs* (*char, gros tas, vedette* or *podule turrel* on an *astronef*). This 'pinning' is achieved by moving first one and then another *destrueteur* into range of the target and then paying one action point per piece to fire. The defending piece is immediately destroyed; no saving throw, nothing. This is rather chess-like though it seems to work well in practice. Conversely, it is not possible for any unit to move into a hex which is covered by two or more enemy fire arcs. This allows defensive lines to form, especially in valleys and narrow waterways. The only exception to this rule is if the move into the hex completes the offensive pair required to kill off one of the defenders. Most units require just the one attack to destroy them but the *Astronef* has to have each of its three turrets knocked out before it is subdued. Once it is occupied by an enemy piece, it's all over for the defending player.

### CHARTS

#### General Games

- ① Pass the Pigs (MB)
- ② Scrabble (Spears)
- ③ Six Day Race (Holtman VIP)
- ④ Monopoly (Waddingtons)
- ⑤ Jenga (MB)
- ⑥ How to Host a Murder (Transatlantic)
- ⑦ Pictionary (Kenner Parker)
- ⑧ 1853 (Hartland Trefoil)
- ⑨ Outburst (Kenner Parker)
- ⑩ Die Macher (Moskito)

Chart supplied by Just Games.



Game tactics can be rather varied. As I mentioned earlier, it is possible to take the wimp option and just collect rocks all the time, producing the odd *crabe* for ease of transportation. This is fine as long as the others leave you alone. Alternatively, you can go for an opponent's throat by taking his *Astronef*. Usually, tactics fall somewhere between these two extremes. The usual ploy is for frantic mining to be balanced with hindering, opportunist raids on your rivals. The interaction of the units due to the combat rules is fascinating. It is an easy mistake to commence mining in the early game before you have adequate defence lines set up. An enterprising neighbour will quickly send a couple of tanks over to sort out undefended *crabes* or, far worse, the *Pondeuse*.

The other factor affecting play is the planetary tide. Each turn, a card is flipped to show whether the tide will be low, normal or high for that turn. Each player with a *pondeuse* will already know what the card is (having looked at it the previous turn) but players often forget and can of course lose their *pondeuse* at any time. The effect of all this is that the map changes on most turns ('*Diabolique, non?*' say the rules) and it adds another factor to your movement decisions. Is it really worth collecting that rock out on the peninsula if your *crabe* is going to be stranded for two or more turns? One sol-

ution, especially if you are surrounded by this dodgy ground, is to build *pontons* to bridge the gaps.

Victory is decided in an unusual way. Points are earned for rocks collected and taken off planet in the *Astronef* (2 points per rock) and for each surviving piece (1 point). The twist is that the number of turns is actually variable with the players having the option to leave the planet at the end of the 21st turn or to wait until the 25th. The decision to take off early is made simultaneously by all players and of course gives the option of simply launching and counting the winnings; very useful if the enemy tanks are closing in. Players in a strong defensive position will probably want to stick around to collect as many rocks as possible or to finish off their attacks and, because the decision is made secretly, one fortunate player could be left with a free run at the remaining minerals.

### LAST BLOOD

**Full Metal Planete** uses the classic game device of limited resources and multiple tasks to force decision making. Add to that the possibilities for overall strategy and a very interesting game emerges. The three games I have played have each been very different. I think this depends on who is playing, but the game definitely benefits from having three or four players

mixing it a bit. As a two player game, unless the *Astronefs* are very close, the contest is a bit boring. **Full Metal Planete** is also a game that rewards the well planned dramatic move and punishes, severely, the stupid mistake. Because of the time constraints on each move, the latter are fairly common.

Because of the lovely components, I was happy enough with **Full Metal Planete** even before I played it. The fact that it turned out to be such a good game was a bonus. It plays quickly (about 90-120 minutes), the rules are logical and easily understood and it really does emphasise good decision making and resource allocation. For rules tinkers, I would think there is ample scope to add new units and rules (such as random mineral distribution, underground mines, moles . . .) without unduly affecting play. There is also plenty of room for vicious play and diplomacy if that's your bag and once again the game displays the classic European syndrome of simple basic game mechanics which allow for in-depth strategies. This is a neat, original game and, although a little costly, it is well worth it.

Mike Siggins

*Full Metal Planete is available from Just Games.*

## TRABER DERBY

DESIGNED BY  
DIETER URACK

PUBLISHED BY  
BURK VERLAG

PRICE £20

\*\*\*\*

**Traber Derby** is devoted to harness racing in which eight teams (horse plus sulky) are driven round a track. It is for up to eight players, but if there are less than eight the teams are divided among the players. Four is a good number, of course, because this means that all eight teams are racing. The worst number in this respect would be five and a lot of interaction would be lost.

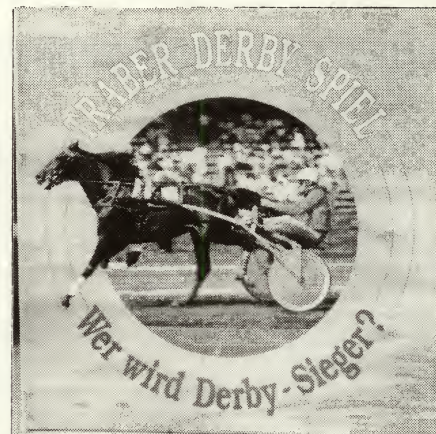
The track is divided into lanes but unlike most games the inner lanes are no shorter than the outer. Instead the lanes are coloured. The inner lane is green, the middle lanes are yellow, and the outer lanes are red.

### EVERYTHING'S GONE GREEN?

To move, each player in numerical order of the teams rolls five dice. Each die has on it two black, two red, one green and one yellow spot. The team moves according to the coloured spots (not the black). If starting on a green space all coloured dots count, if on a yellow only yellow and red count, and if starting on a red only the red spots count towards movement. From this it can be seen that a green space car-

There seems no end to the new ideas people come up with for moving half-a-dozen cars/horses/dogs/bicycles round a race track. These continual new twists to a simple mechanism have brought us some great games in the past and will, I am sure, continue to do so.

The games fair at Essen brought at least two new such games to our attention (I say 'at least' because there may have been others that we missed). These were **Favoriten** and **Traber Derby**, both of which had a lot going for them.



ries more moving potential but it is easy to be boxed in. Here should be mentioned a rule I know has been overlooked by players, which is that on the first turn *all* coloured dots count towards movement irrespective of the colour of the space the team is starting from. If all five blacks are thrown a team is disqualified (except on the first turn when it involves a new start).

A major part of the race tactics is to adjust one's move so that an opponent is boxed in. Although a team can move forward, diagonally, or sideways it cannot move diagonally through a gap between



two teams. This not only makes boxing in a major feature of the game but it also drives teams round the outside and on to the unfavourable red spaces.

Each team is also given four spurt cards, each enabling it to move one additional space. More than one card can be used in the same turn, which although illogical is an essential ingredient to the fun of the game. A full game comprises three races.

The general quality is good with the teams being represented by well-made wooden pieces, exactly as we have come to expect from German game producers.

It is only fair to mention how we came to learn about the game. We first overheard a conversation in which two people were saying that they had just played this new racing game which, in their opinion, was

the best game of its type since **Win, Place & Show**. Since it hadn't been mentioned by any of my normally reliable contacts at Essen, we sought them out to enquire after it. 'Don't bother,' we were told. 'It's nothing more than a dice rolling game.'

Because we had told the inventor we would return for a demonstration the following day two of us duly kept our promise. We thoroughly enjoyed the game despite being soundly thrashed by the two experts – our four teams ignominiously occupying the last four positions. On the strength of the experience we both unhesitatingly bought copies.

While not agreeing that it is in the same class as the unique **Win, Place & Show** I would certainly recommend it.

*Derek Carver*

## À LA CARTE

DESIGNED BY  
KARL-HEINZ SCHMIEL

PUBLISHED BY  
MOSKITO GAMES

PRICE £17

\*\*\*\*

As the rest of the world generally agrees, the English are to food what Exxon is to the environment. Fortunately for our (English) readers, the cooking involved in this game requires strategic skills, rather than those of a culinary nature. At first sight, indeed at second, third, and fourth sight, the components included here must be the most unusual ever found in a game: four (real) frying pans; four (semi-real) spice jars; and four (unreal) hot plates. You'll be surprised to learn that they arrive in a bookcase box, rather than a bin liner.

## CURRY FAVOUR

As the rules state rather charmingly, 'Each player is a member of a coffee circle who try their hand at being a chef.' Totry your hand at being a *successful* chef you must first choose a recipe, and then heat your concoction to the level stated on the recipe. Unless it's a salad. In which case, don't do as I did and inadvertently warm it up, or as one of my fellow (smart-assed) chefs put it: 'Shouldn't you turn your salad down a bit.'

In addition to heat, your meal will also need some spices – again the recipe will tell you how much. On your turn you may perform three actions in any order: eat your hot plate, season your dish, hold a coffee morning, set aside your completed, or ruined meal.

Yes, I know that's four, but you can only choose three. You may also choose the same action more than once.

Heating your dish means a die roll, upon which the results can vary dramatically. For example, a 'W' result gives you the opportunity to interfere with a dish one of the rival chefs is preparing. Can you imagine anything more designed to enrage a chef? Interference takes the form of shaking one of the spice jars (that he doesn't need) over the frying pan of the by now enraged chef. A meal is ruined when it contains three or more units of any one spice. Seasoning your dish involves selecting a spice you actually need and then inverting the bottle over your frying pan, hoping the spice you need will pop out.

## SALTY DOG

Sounds simple, but that's because we haven't mentioned the salt. Each jar contains four salt tablets at the outset. Get three of these in your meal, and it's back to the baking board. If you have a ruined meal on your hot plate, all is not lost. Another chef may decide to organise a coffee morning. To do this successfully involves extracting four different coloured coffee cups from the bag provided. If the outcome is favourable all hot-plates, and anything on them, are passed to the chef on the right or left. Effectively, you steal the dish from a rival chef, preferably one that is just about done to perfection. (*sacre bleu! zat ees worse than the 'ow you say? interference*). This can also result in a ruined meal ending up in front of you.

A round finishes when a chef has successfully completed four recipes, or when there are no recipes to choose. Points are scored according to the value of the recipes completed. Ruined meals count always as minus one. The winner is the player with the most points after an agreed number of rounds.

As you may have gathered, this is a pretty wacky, though brilliantly original game, as indeed we have come to expect from the designer of *Die Macher* and *Suppenkasper*. Not the sort of dish for those who take their gaming seriously, though. There are a number of decisions to be made throughout the game, though really to dwell on them would be superfluous. The only real requirement for enjoying this game is a sense of humour.

*Brian Walker*





# FAVORITEN

DESIGNED BY  
WALTER MÜLLER

PUBLISHED BY  
SPIELWERK STADT

PRICE £17

\*\*\*

You probably hadn't planned on buying a *taktical wurfenspiel* for any of your friends this Christmas. Doubtless they are not expecting to find one in their pillowcase either. More's the pity, for this simple dice game would certainly alleviate after-pud lethargy. The nominal theme of this game is horse racing, though it could equally be combine harvesters whirring through the wheat. A tad ironic this, as the star feature of the game is the betting system – normally the downfall of games concerning the sport of kings. The way it works is this: each player gets three betting tokens. At the start of a turn, each player may place a bet by placing one of his tokens on the first empty space of the column corresponding to the horse he wishes to bet on (each column has five descending spaces for bets). The turn leader then rolls the die five times.

After each roll he must move one of the horses, though not one he has already moved. There then commences a new betting round. The race ends when three horses have crossed the finish line. All tokens that have been bet on these three horses are now placed on the appropriate scoring column in the centre of the board. And that's your lot, really.

## WIN, PLACE, AND WOE

Despite the simplicity of the design, there is plenty of decision making, and interaction – in other words: nobbling. The most crucial of the former is when to place a bet. If you place one early, then you will score more points should that horse finish in the first three. This is somewhat risky though, as you are betting blind.

However, if you leave your bet to the final straight, you can be sure of picking up some points as the finishing positions become much clearer. These are likely to be of lesser value though, as the higher positions on the columns will have been filled up by this time.

The movement system couldn't be simpler, yet even here there are tricky



decisions involved. Rolls of 1s and 6s are easy, but what of the 3s and 4s? What then? Do you move a horse on which you have a heavy stake if you come up with a 4 on the third turn? Or do you wait and risk rolling 1s on the fourth and fifth.

Another factor emerges after the first race – playing against the leader. Clearly you don't want to help somebody who is ahead, but what if you have both bet on the same horse? Crucial to all these decisions is the points scoring system, which has been very cleverly worked out.

The production of the game is impressive for such a small company; a solid board, wooden chess type pieces to represent the horses, all packed into a Ravensburger box. The artwork is interesting too – compositional elements of Miro combine with Scarfe, in one of his lighter moods, to produce a package that is as pleasing to look at as it is to play. This *favoriten* will run and run.

Brian Walker

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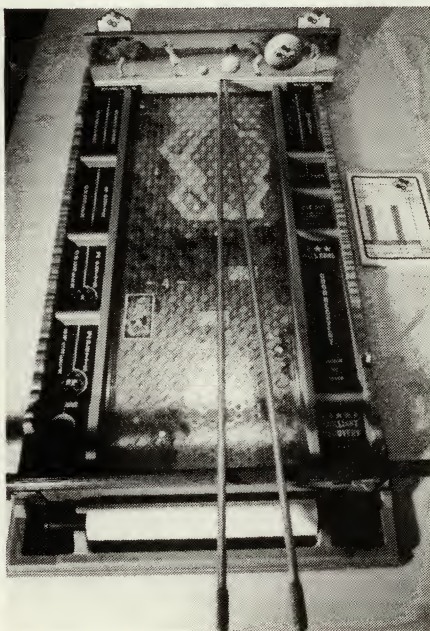
Despite the modish cover art, **Rub Out** is a game from another time and another place. The time: 1978. The place: New York City. Yes, you've guessed it, an SPI clone. Even down to the errata. Also the designer, Brent Holsworthy, is best known for the work he did with SPI. If nothing else, **Rub Out** perfectly illustrates the differences in approach to game design between the Americans and (continental) Europeans. The former largely follow the 'roll a die and consult a table' school of thought. Primarily, one suspects, because of the influence of wargames where such a concept is the norm. Problems occur, however, when this approach is transferred to producing what is supposed to be a 'fun game'. Does anybody really want to be moving stacks of cardboard counters around, consulting combat tables, and checking exceptions to rule 23a paragraph 2, when all they want is an evening's fun?

The theme of this game, as might be evident from the title, is gangsters. The idea is to extort money, rub out your rivals, and gain income by controlling various 'joints'. Considering the price, the production quality of the game leaves a lot to be desired. Cheap paper cards, an unattractive unmounted map, and cardboard

counters, do not add up to £21.95 in my book, even allowing for the cost of importation. To cap it all, the wrong information appears on one part of the map. We all miss SPI, but this really is carrying nostalgia too far.

***Rub Out** is published by the Australian Design Group. Price £21.95. Available through most specialist games shops.*

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If I told you that this next product was called **Dexad**, you'd probably wonder what we are doing reviewing toilet disinfectants in this magazine. **Dexad**, you'll be relieved to hear, has no connections with latrines in any shape or form.

**Dexad** is a thing of wonder, or, to be more precise, a golf game. Not a game in the normal sense of the word though, more like one of those bagatelle machines so popular with our ancestors. Dexterity is the key here, as players try to manoeuvre the ball bearing along the fairway into the hole. Transport is via two wire rods which span the course. By gradually opening these the ball will roll down the rods above the fairway. Open them wide enough and the ball will plummet onto the green, or a bunker if dexterity is not your cup of tee. Once the ball has been deposited thus, the spot is marked on the course by means of the water soluble pen provided.

When all players have teed off, the course is then scrolled up, in a rather clever way, to the point where the shot nearest the tee landed. Altogether, there are 18 different courses provided, which are accessed via the aforementioned scrolling mechanism. The contraption is beautifully produced,

as are all the accessories provided. Fifty quid may seem like a lot for a game, but what you get here is a lot of game, and more.

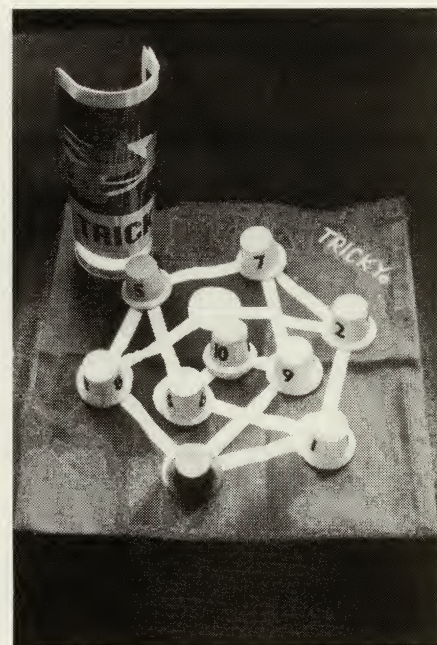
***Dexad** is published by K Haynes Enterprises, Price £49.95. Available from Just Games.*

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If **Dexad** represents the gargantuan end of the games market then **Tricky** is minimalism gone mad. Fortunately, this term only applies to the size, not the quality. The game comes neatly packaged in a cylindrical container, inside of which you will discover a bag which has the dual function of providing a home for the components, and serving as a playing area. The pieces look like parking cones with numbers writ large upon them. This is appropriate as the 'board' looks like spaghetti junction. At the start players place the cones, one at a time, on the board. The object is to follow the paths and capture the cones with the highest point value, while at the same time taking care not to be captured by your opponent. Movement is restricted to the next stopping point. As you might have gathered this is a two-player game, but unlike many of this genre, **Tricky** does not drag on and on. With a playing time of under five minutes, you could say **Tricky** is a quickie. But only if you had no shame.

***Tricky** is published by Applied Technology. Price £5.95 (see ad for ordering details).*

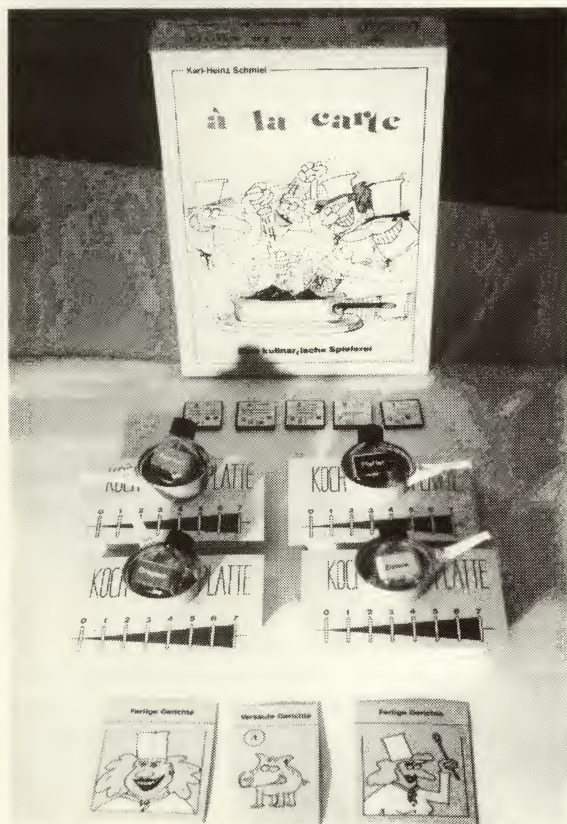
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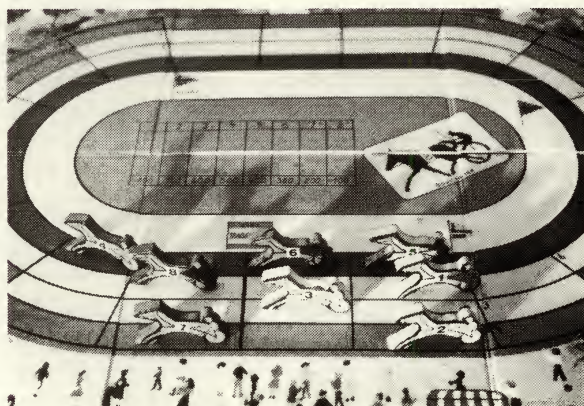
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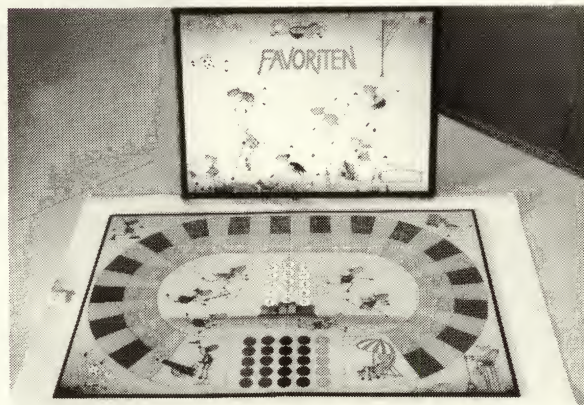


The new game from the designer of  
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## CHRISTMAS GAMES

# Critics' choice

*Yes, it's almost Christmas, for some unfathomable reason, the time of year that is synonymous with games, among other things. Doubtless there are many of our readers who will be wondering what game to trot out after the in-laws have wolfed down the Christmas pud, and emptied the bottle of Remy.*

To assist you in this task, we asked some of our writers to name the four games they would choose to inflict on relatives barely capable of standing up, let alone counting past two.

## Brian Walker

**Broadway** (TSR). I would opt for this game if we were using the variant in issue #4 (the 'star roll'). Without this rule, the game can be overlong. Otherwise, this is an excellent interactive family game: roll the die, move, collect/pay money. All the elements non-gamers understand, yet just enough strategy to prevent the purist from praying for the final curtain.

**Topple** (Waddingtons). Although not a game for even the partially inebriated, it's great fun for all, and plays quickly and simply.

**Snapshot** (Avalon Hill). Another favourite, especially if there is a large gathering (the game can handle eight), designed by Alan R Moon. The race to get into the playoffs always produces lots of drama. Even the fact it is an elimination game – normally a social minus, does not seem to affect the enjoyment factor.

**Family Business** (Mayfair/Spielfreaks). Undoubtedly one of the best thematic

card games around and one with a terrific revenge factor; put the mother/father in-law on the hit list; take out a contract on your dreary uncle/aunt; wipe out all your relatives in one clean swoop. If this game doesn't ensure that this visit will be their last, you just haven't been playing it right.

## Derek Carver

**Showbiz** (Hexagames). It would be false modesty as well as being untruthful if I didn't choose my own game. It was purposely invented as a game to be enjoyed by all and although I'm not an inventor who endlessly plays just his own games, it is nonetheless true that when we have a party involving non-gamers I choose **Showbiz**. Pretty well all action is simultaneous, which even the most shy person seems to enjoy.

**Liar's Dice** (MB). Of late I've been introducing people to this game (if you can't buy it over here it doesn't matter – just a collection of dice will do) and it has proved enormously popular with just about everybody.

**Boggle** (Waddingtons). Another good old standby with a mixed group (though I much prefer **Big Boggle**). You don't have to get people to sit round a table, which is an advantage; it can be played round the fire.

**Timber** (Paradigm). It's pretty difficult to get uptight about pulling a log out of a collapsing tower, and the less good you are at it the more people will like you. It could even be a good test to prove you're still fit to drive home.

## Alan R Moon

I couldn't narrow it down to just four (*Of course! – Ed*).

**Pictionary** (Kenner Parker). Better than **Trivial Pursuit** because it puts all the players on an equal footing. Most first time players will be heard to utter: 'But I can't draw,' but this is exactly what makes

the game fun. In fact, someone who can draw well may do poorly because players have got used to the 'stick man' style of play. Also, it is one of the only games my wife Denise will play.

**Liar's Dice** (Milton Bradley). Not only does it take less than two minutes to teach, but each player has only five or less dice to think about, so there is no overload before or during the game. Despite this, there is lots of decision making and an enjoyable kind of tension.

**Careers** (Parker Brothers). A little more strategy involved than **Monopoly** and none of the dealing (bickering?). Unfortunately, the game was over-simplified in its later editions with major rules changes and the deletion of careers like farming and seafaring.

**Karriere Poker** (Hexagames). With the right group, half of the fun of this game is the banter that takes place between the players. Usually brings out the competitive spirit in everyone, just like our real dog-eat-dog world.

**6-Day Race** (Holtmann VIP). One of those special games that makes it seem like you're doing more than you really are. Always fun to hear someone moan: 'How did this happen,' as they find themselves six or eight spaces behind and dropped by the pack.

## Philip Murphy

Have you noticed that our Great White Chief has no concept of reality? 'I want four Xmas games!' he demands. Blah – it's just not possible. Here's eight from me, and *that's* a heavily trimmed list!

**À La Carte** (Moskito). A laugh-a-minute job, discovered at this year's Essen fair, fits the bit for three or four players.

**Broadway** (TSR), **Quest** (Questtime Games) and **Suppenkasper** (Mattel) can be played by up to six. Producing hit stage shows may be a tad long at two hours plus but no less fun for that, while regular readers will know all about my Arthurian



all-time favourite and the 'Just one more wafer-thin mint, Mr Creosote' game.

**Kangaroo and Ave Caesar** (both Ravensburger). More than six can be a nightmare but fast-paced games will keep the junior urban guerillas happy. The latter is a traffic jam nightmare with chariots while the former demands precise risk-taking (based on judging die rolls) for success.

**6-Day Race** (Holtmann VIP). Even though it must be a contender for GI's 'Most Mentioned Game' award for '89, it has to be here too. Possession of this game is essential before the Great White Chief will let you sub to this fine organ, so there's no need for me to describe it.

**Partymime** (Pantomime). Top of the list, even though it's just all the stuff you need to play Charades. Stop laughing, you swines! Charades is a great game, and it is Christmas!

## Ian Livingstone

**6-Day Race** (Holtmann VIP). No dice are even needed for this classic cycle racing game. Movement is by cards with a great 'slipstreaming' feature. Each race takes about 20 fun-packed minutes and should interest the nippers enough before they race off for real on their new Mountain Bikes.

**Can't Stop** (Parker Bros). There is nothing *but* dice rolling in this abstract probability game. Keep rolling those dice and know when to call a halt, otherwise if you 'can't stop' it could result in a no score turn. A good one for gambling mince pies with the neighbours.

**Maestro** (Hans im Glück). Filling orchestras with musicians from your agency is fun and skilful enough to keep your grandparents awake after Christmas lunch so that they can watch the Queen's Speech.

**Suppenkasper** (Mattel). Relevant to the bloated stomachs sitting around the Christmas dinner table, players must eat meals, count their calories and try to keep a 'dream figure'. Play it with friends who have promised to go on diets next week.

## Mark Green

**Monopoly** (Waddingtons). Boxing Day sees the gathering of four generations of Greens, and the gamers get a chance to show their skills. Unfortunately no one is capable of tackling **Die Macher** after lunch so instead we all settle down for the annual **Monopoly** game. Grandma proves she is still a smart operator and cleans up London.

**Jenga** (MB). Appetites are whetted and the youngest ones are tired of their train sets or dolls. Out comes **Jenga**, where the steadiest hands belong to those who have indulged the least. The tower of blocks soon reaches vertiginous heights as the incompetents are weeded out.

**Hare & Tortoise** (Gibsons). Steady play reaps rewards here, just like Christmas consumption; race ahead too fast and you'll falter, but go too slowly and the whole affair becomes pedestrian.

**Capital Adventure** (Capital Games). Forget the rest, this is the best quiz game by far. Laying out the massive world map takes 10 minutes while we get a lecture

on geography from Uncle Bob. Then down to the game where smart routes and clever tactics make up for unlucky runs of music questions!

## Mike Siggins

**Under Cover** (Ravensburger). This game avoids the potential embarrassment that might arise from backstabbing, as you never know who you are helping or hindering, except yourself. Like all the games I suggest, it has very simple rules that can be picked up in no time and the game lasts about half an hour, an ideal length for non-gamers.

**Liar's Dice** (MB). This is a great game for a Christmas get-together and is a lot like **Spoof**, a game that is a perennial favourite anyway. It is quick, noisy and can be played by all the members of the family with similar chances of success as luck does play a part. The only problem is that players are gradually knocked out which means some down-time for Gran who can go and mix an Alka-Seltzer or something. It beats **Monopoly** every time.

**Wildlife Adventure** (Ravensburger). Probably my favourite 'family' game. The idea of this one is to plan an expedition round the world taking pictures of endangered species of animals. The movement system is clever and each animal is neatly depicted on a card with an explanation of its particular predicament – these are read out to everybody so it is educational and Green at the same time. There is also plenty of room for gentle hindrance of other players' routes and objectives.

**Scotland Yard** (Ravensburger). An interesting deduction game that isn't too tough and which makes a pleasant change from **Cluedo**. One player takes the part of the invisible Mr X who is on the run in London, desperately trying to avoid being caught by all the other players. As a change from the usual car chase, all participants have to use public transport or taxis to get around. You have a limited supply of tickets and must use them to capture Mr X before the end of the game.

## John Harrington

**Topple** (Waddingtons). This is a game I like to play after everyone has consumed a lot of 'falling down water', because chances are they will then be as inept at it as I am when I'm sober. It has two of the vital ingredients for a good family



Ian Livingstone's Christmas selection



game; it is simple to learn and it has spectator appeal. I don't know why but at Christmas I like to play games which involve things falling all over the place. This is probably because I am usually falling all over the place, too.

**Dizzy, Dizzy Dinosaur** (MB). Friends will tell you I enjoy a good wind-up, and this one featuring a clockwork dinosaur who charges around in random fashion like an England midfield player is rollicking fun. I could say that I only play it because it brings such glee to my young nephews, who belong to the age group at which this game is aimed, but that would be a lie. I enjoy it because it is another game in which things fall all over the place.

**Hare & Tortoise** (Gibsons). I picked this up at a rummage sale for two quid. I can't understand anyone wanting to sell it, as it is a game which can be enjoyed by kids and adults alike. A beautiful game mechanic allied to a familiar, if somewhat frivolous, theme. I usually adopt the tortoise approach and end up last, but worth a fortune in carrots. 'Corner in carrots!' as Pit players might cry.

**Crossfire** (Ideal). What a great game. I can't understand why it is not televised. Memories of everyone turning up to school after the Christmas holidays with enormous blisters on their trigger fingers after overdosing on this ice hockey variant, where you fire ball-bearings at the puck in order to propel it into your opponent's goal. As well as providing frenetic action the game has some tactical scope as well, with every ball-bearing you fire serving to increase your opponent's ammunition – and vice versa. The only drawback with the game, apart from the blistered fingers, was that one player's gun always had a stronger spring than the other player's. Perhaps this game would be best suited as an arcade classic to match pinball.

### *John Harrington's four games*

*not to play at Christmas:*

**Monopoly** (Waddingtons). This game has been around for so long that everyone plays different rules, which leads to furious arguments. Furthermore, the aim of the game is to hound your opponents into bankruptcy and eliminate them from the game, and some younger members of the family clearly aren't emotionally ready to handle this rude introduction to the realities of life. This game is a marriage

breaker and should carry a government health warning.

**Charades**. Someone always does 'Gone With The Wind' every year, and jokes about flatulence are so tiresome.

**Anything hyped to the moon**. This year it's probably the **Neighbours** game in Britain which will be receiving the big media push. For all I know there is a **Batman – The Boardgame** already out and doubtless the **Back to the Future II** skateboarding game is about to hit the streets. Don't buy these hastily cobbled together cash-in efforts; it only encourages them.

**Scruples** (MB) As my fellow GI contributor Kevin Warne once put it: 'You are the sales manager responsible for trying to clear the warehouses of millions of copies of an overpriced, over hyped, over Americanised, yuppie dinner party game. Do you tell the public it's a crap game (or do you merely slash the price by 75%)?' This game may very well do the business in America where everyone likes everyone else to know 'where they come from', but here in reserved England we are more interested in 'where you are going to'. I'm going to the pub, and you'd be well advised to, also, whenever someone suggests playing this game.

*To round things off, Derek*

*Carver presents two 'do-it-yourself' games.*

### **Fives to the right**

This favourite of ours is an old dice game that some of you might know, that I have slightly modified (*Of course! – Ed*). Each player starts with an equal number of dice – it can be any number but we always start five each (so you need a large bag of dice).

Players in turn roll all of their dice. Every die with a 5 showing is passed to the player on the right. Every die with a 2 showing is passed to the player on the left. Every die with a 2 showing is passed to the player on the left. But any dice with a 1 showing is put into a pot in the middle (and thus out of the game) together with what is agreed as the basic stake – five pence is a good sum.

Players retain any dice that show 3, 4 or 6. Play continues clockwise. Thus on the first round the second player would be

rolling his original five dice plus any that had been passed to him by the first player as a result of rolling 2s.

As play proceeds the number of dice in play gets reduced, of course, as the 1s are rolled, and the kitty slowly expands, with dice being passed forwards and backwards round the table as 2s and 5s are rolled. If you have no dice you simply skip your turn until such time as you get some: you are not out of the game because you can be given dice by your neighbours as they roll 2s or 5s.

When there is only one die left play continues as before – the player having the die rolls it, passing it to the left or right if he rolls a 2 or a 5. But when a 1 is at last rolled on that final die the game is over and the player rolling the final 1 takes the kitty.

### **The book game**

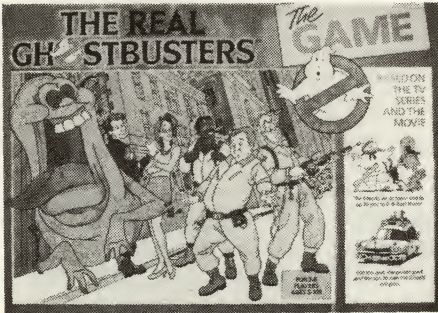
A flick through our family's photo albums will show a succession of Christmas photos of people roaring with laughter while holding a book. They are playing The Book Game. This is based on the old favourite The Dictionary Game (known as *Call My Bluff* on TV), but in The Book Game everybody arrives with a couple of books (or raids the house to find a couple). The person whose turn it is (we'll call them Player A) tells people the title and author, and reads out the blurb that tells what the book's about.

Each player then secretly writes what he or she considers to be an opening sentence for the book and hands it to Player A. Player A, meanwhile, has written down the *correct* opening sentence. He or she then shuffles all of the bits of paper identifying them with a letter or a number (only he or she knows who they are from, and which is the correct sentence, of course). He or she then reads them out and all players have to vote for the one they consider to be the *correct* opening sentence. When all have declared their vote Player A reveals all. Each player voting for the correct sentence wins 3 points. For every incorrect vote the player(s) writing the sentence voted for win(s) 1 point for each guess. Finally, if nobody guessed the correct sentence, the player choosing the book (Player A in this case), wins 3 points. Play then continues round the room. Explained in this manner the game can sound a bit dry, but I can assure you it isn't. It's amazing what people write and the books you choose can range from *Teach Yourself Taxidermy* (if there is such a book), to *Murder on the Orient Express*. G1



## CHRISTMAS GAMES

*We asked some of our younger writers to take a look at three of the new releases.*



### GHOSTBUSTERS

The object of the game is to zap all of the ghosts and to collect points. At the end of the game you all have to zap Mr Stay Puft.

The players start off at Ghostbusters central, and move along the squares by throwing a die. Once you get to a house with a ghost in it, you spin a zap meter and if you have a large enough rating on the scale you get the ghost and put it in your ghost trap. At the end of the game everybody on the board gets together to zap Mr Stay Puft, after which you count up your score in your ghost traps, and the player with the highest score wins. The game also involves getting three cards which you can win from each other. Also within the game you play paper, scissors, stone.

*What age group?* 5+

*Is the game easy to play?* Quite easy.

*Are the rules easy to understand?* Not quite as easy for younger children.

*Is there any way to improve the game?* Yes, the squares could be marked more clearly, and the pieces should be printed on both sides.

*Did you enjoy the game?* After we got into it it became quite exciting.

*Published by* Paradigm Games, *price* £12.95.

### M25

The object of the game is to get to London, situated in the centre of the board, and park your car. This is not as easy as it sounds.

after the first throw of the die it is not used again unless you crash and get knocked back to the start. You then pick up cards and try to tell the other players what is on them by either a charade, lip reading or drawing. If you land on a cone you would go for a four pointer. The person who guesses correctly gets two points while you get four points. The number of points determines how many moves you get.

*What age group?* 9+

*Is it easy to play?* Yes, it would make a good party game.

*Are the rules easy to understand?* Quite easy.

*Is there any way to improve the game?* It could do with shortening. The game could take a long time if you had a lot of players.

*Did you enjoy the game?* Yes, it was very funny.

*Published by* BV Leisure. *Price* £12.95

*Reviews by* Gavin Louer (aged 8) and Ben Louer (aged 12).



### ANTICIPATION

*Object of the game* – It's quite easy to understand. What you have to do is to make a queen ant from your opponent's playing pieces. The ants' pieces are magnetic so that if you want to capture a piece you have to throw the exact number on either die to land on top of your opponent's piece, but if the magnet rejects it you lose your piece to your opponent.

*The Game* – It's great fun, especially when the stack of ants gets really high and you try desperately to get it back to your nest before someone gets you. When we got into the game (which didn't take long) we found the water barriers a hazard, and you hate anyone who moves them in front of you.

*Improvements* – The colours of the ant pieces were quite difficult to see in some lights. It would be better if the ants were coloured in.

*Anticipation is published by* Capital Games, *price* £16.99.

*Review by* Gavin Louer (age 12).

### DIZZY DIZZY DINOSAUR

The object of this game is to try and get your cave people safely home and avoid accidentally being trampled on by Dizzy the dinosaur (dinosaurs are very clumsy).

Each turn you must roll the dice and move your tribe, however, if Dizzy shows up on either dice face then he wakes up. You must then wind up Dizzy so that he spins round the board, knocking the cave people off the paths. Any cavemen, or cavewomen, that get knocked off the path in this manner, must go back to the start. The winner is the first player to get all his people safely home.

*What age group?* 4+

*Is the game easy to play?* Very.

*Are the rules easy to understand?* Yes.

*Is there any way to improve the game?* Yes, it would be more fun if the pieces fell over rather than being pushed aside. Also, Dizzy should go faster.

*Did you enjoy the game?* No. We thought it was boring after a while.

*Published by* MB. *Price* £8.99.

*Brian Walker (aged over 21).*





## COLLECTOR'S CORNER

# Old bones, new bodies

*Bruce Whitehill, the Big Game*

*Hunter, looks at the origin of some 'current' American games.*

Thousand-year-old games are on sale now at your local toy store. Many of the games you can buy today were played throughout the world centuries ago. It may be difficult to people sitting around in the year 3000 BC playing board games, but we know that board games are *at least* that old, judging by the ones that were found in 1922 entombed with King Tut. There are even claims that the games known as Mancala or Wari may go back 7000 years!

By comparison, the commercial manufacture of games in the United States is a relatively recent phenomenon. Although playing cards were used in the colonies, American card games did not appear until the early 1800s, and board games were not manufactured in the United States until the 1840s. Advances in commercial lithography in the mid 1800s contributed greatly to the production of lithographed cards, game boards, and game boxes. It is interesting to note that the many early games produced by printers and lithographers were described as being 'published' rather than 'manufactured'.

Some of the American companies which began in the 1800s are still making games today: Milton Bradley, now owned by Hasbro, was founded in 1860 by Bradley, who was a lithographer. In 1920, Bradley bought out McLoughlin Brothers, a firm which began producing hand-coloured games in the 1850s. McLoughlin games, incidentally, usually have extraordinary lithography, and are highly prized by collectors.

Parker Brothers, now a division of Tonka, was started as George S Parker Co in 1883. In 1888, one of George Parker's

brothers joined the company, thus creating Parker Brothers. Ten years later a third brother signed on, and in 1901 the company incorporated. They were bought by General Mills in 1968.

Selchow & Righter was founded as E G Selchow & Co in 1867, though the company's 1877-8 catalogue reads: 'Established in 1864'. The 1864 date may refer to the opening of Albert Swift's toy and game business, which Selchow obtained the rights to in 1867. John Righter joined Selchow in 1870, and in 1880 the company name was changed to Selchow & Righter. Unlike Bradley and Parker, Selchow and Righter were initially 'jobbers' - that is, they sold other companies' games - then in 1927 they abandoned the practice and turned to selling only their own products. Selchow & Righter remained a family-owned business for 119 years, and was sold in 1986 to Coleco, a company which filed for bankruptcy soon after and was then bought by Hasbro.

Many of the games being sold now by these early giants and by various smaller American companies were developed in the United States from ten to over sixty years ago and are still popular favourites. Other are classic games which have been played in different parts of the world for hundreds and hundreds of years. In some cases, only the box covers have changed over time. In other instances, the names as well as the graphics have been changed, and the games have been reissued or 're-invented'. This is a look at the history of some of these current games - some the same games our grandparents played - and a look at the industry's so-called 'new' games which are really just updated editions or repackaged versions of earlier, sometimes ancient, games.

Milton Bradley, for example, has introduced the 'new' Yo-Go - a large hour-glass shaped toy that's balanced on a string, made to spin, and tossed in the air. This device is the same as a turn-of-

the-century gimmick called the Diablo or the Mefisto, but it's minus the two sticks onto which the string was attached. This Flying Cone, as it was sometimes called, was often made from one piece of wood or from two cones attached at the narrow ends. A 1907 ad for Mefisto notes that the game 'is said to have been an ancient Greek or Roman game, and that classical dancers used to practice it to attain lightness and grace.' *The Young Folks' Cyclopaedia of Games and Sports* published in 1890 claims the toy, called also Devil on Two Sticks, originated in China where pedlars used the toy's humming sound to announce their presence. Like the Bradley model, the Chinese used just string and no sticks. In China, the inverted cones were cylinders made out of bamboo or metal, whereas the Bradley cones are, of course, plastic.

The game may have been played in China many centuries BC, and was said to have been brought from there to England at the end of the eighteenth century. It appeared in France under the name of 'Devil' twenty years later. The French game, which used cylinders made of the finest wood, and sometimes even of glass, was so popular that 'ladies and even persons of eminence strove to excel in it.'

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More and more old parlour games are finding their way into new boxes. The game of Categories, for example, was a parlour game popular at least from the 1930s through the 1950s. The object was to list names or items, such as 'A Movie Star' or 'A Kitchen Utensil', that begin with a given letter. A 1927 game in book form called Guggenheim noted that the editors 'discovered it was . . . an old favourite of the smart literary set about New York. For several years it has been played across the tea tables of the intelligentsia (sic), dividing popularity with such mental tortures as charades . . .' Milton Bradley boxed it, put in a polyhedral die, timer, and category boards and called it **Scattergories**. The game has one innovation: a feature similar to **Boggle** in that players are awarded points only if their answers are different from everybody else's.

Many of Milton Bradley's current games had their origins elsewhere. **Battleship**, a classic in Bradley's line since 1967, was formerly a pencil and paper parlour game that dates back more than 50 years. Interestingly enough, Bradley produced its own pad-and-pencil **Battleship**-style game in 1943 called **Broadside, The Game of Naval Strategy**. Ten years before that, in 1933, a small company called The Strathmore Co published a boxed version of the same game, called **Combat, The Battleship Game**. The game used battleship grids on a 'magic slate' (where you wrote with a stylus, then lifted the paper to make all writing disappear). Two years earlier, in 1931, the Starex Novelty Co produced a battleship game called **Salvo**, a book-style game which contained instructions and pages of grids. In 1961 Ideal used the name **Salvo** for their battleship game, which consisted of two-dimensional plastic ships of various shapes and sizes. The ships stood upright when pressed into the large, die-cut playing board, and a 'hit' was indicated by inserting a small plastic peg into one of the holes in the side of the ship.

Naturally, the ships used over the years changed, ranging from a battleship, a battle cruiser and two torpedo boats in the 1933, to a Dreadnought, a cruiser, a destroyer, and a sub-chaser in a 1940s game called **Warfare Naval Combat**. This version was packaged like a writing tablet, and was manufactured by Maurice L. Freedman of Providence, Rhode Island. Variations of **Battleship** can also be found, such as in **Wings**, a game by Strategy Games of Venice, California. This game, from about 1932, is subtitled: 'The New Olympic Game', and pictures planes flying over the Los Angeles Coliseum; the rules are the same as for

**Battleship**, but planes are used instead of ships.

**Chutes and Ladders**, which was introduced under that name by Milton Bradley in 1943, is based on Snakes and Ladders, a morality game from India. Other companies used the Snakes and Ladders name when the game was first sold in the United States. Bradley's 1943 catalogue pays tribute to the game's immediate ancestor, calling Snakes and Ladders 'England's most famous indoor sport.'

Snakes and Ladders was a path race game of pure luck and no skill. A player would move the number of spaces indicated on two dice. In the original game, if the player landed on the tail of a snake, which was a space indicating one of various vices, the player was forced to slide along the snake to a space closer to start; if the player landed on the bottom of a ladder, a space which specified a particular virtue, the player moved ahead by climbing the ladder. Vice and virtue were not included in the original 1943 Bradley game, which is almost identical to the Bradley version of forty-six years later.

**Connect Four** was introduced in 1974 and has been one of the company's most popular games since then. According to a company called Northwest Corner, Inc, of Bellevue, Washington, the game dates to the time of Captain Cook when, as legend has it, it was played by the captain and two of his shipboard scientists during their exploration of the South Pacific.

Northwest Corner's version of the game is said to be an authentic-looking replica of an early English sea chest – all wood with brass fittings. They call it **The Captain's Mistress**, the name that had been

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**PARKER BROTHERS**

affectionately given to the game supposedly because of the companionship it brought Cook on the long journeys.

Remember the cute, bug-like game of **Cootie**? It was first put out in 1949 by Schaper, a company named for the game's inventor, Herb Schaper. The fishing enthusiast-turned-game designer allegedly visualised the plaything while he was working on a new kind of lure. But back in 1927, a company known only as JHW copyrighted a pencil and paper game called **Tu-tee**. Depending on what number was thrown on one die, a player could draw parts of a bug: a body, head, or tail, or one eye, one leg, or one feeler (of the two, six, and six required). **Cootie** is now owned by Milton Bradley, and is the same dice-rolling, put-the-cootie-bug-together game that, according to one source, was 'named after the infamous bug of the World War II trenches.' G

*The big game hunter rounds up some more games next issue.*

## About the author

Bruce Whitehill is one of the world's foremost authorities on American games. Known also as 'The Big Game Hunter', he has the largest diversified collection of antique American games in the world – over 350 US game companies represented from 1840 to 1960. He also has an impressive collection of game advertisements, which he uses to help him with his games research. He has written extensively on the history of American games and game companies, and his articles appear regularly in *Antique Toy World* magazine, and numerous other publications.

Games are both an avocation and a vocation for Mr Whitehill, who has spent

seven years as a game inventor and consultant to the Toy and Game industry. He has invented such games as **Ripley's Believe It Or Not!**, **The Fraggles Rock Game**, **Centipede**, and **Championship Baseball** among others. When he is not inventing or writing about games, he is buying, selling, and exhibiting old games around the USA.

Mr Whitehill is the founder and past president of the American Game Collector's Association, and currently serves on its board of directors. He spent over two years as editor of *Game Times*, an international newsletter for collectors of antique games. He is currently working on a book on the history of American games.







he cannot, or has no desire to, do anything else. At his turn's end, with suitable gloating chuckles, he returns his captives to their owners, at the same time taking from the missile pool stages of nuclear missiles, in equal numbers, in exchange. These stages snap together and up to a four-stage rocket may be built. This is then placed on the board, in its owner's territory, and may be fired any time during his *next* turn (thus giving all other players the chance to raid his missile site).

Now missiles are nasty things. If a missile explodes within one of your empires, you could quite easily be blown out of existence. When a Warlord gets to explode a missile, he becomes a very powerful man and everyone seems suddenly to come over with a very cocktail party-type politeness when speaking to him. A missile can be exploded anywhere within its range, and its *range* (measured in *regions*) is the same as the number of stages it has been built to. Thus, a three-stager can be aimed up to three regions away from its base.

These missiles are nuclear and therefore explode with devastating effects. The region which a missile lands on becomes *radioactive* and a black radioactive marker is placed on that area. The regions

surrounding the radioactive area are *devastated* and all armies therein are removed. A missile blows a great big hole in the board. For example, a missile exploded in the Appenines is capable of wiping out the whole of Italy.

The resultant radioactive areas which begin to appear remain impassable for the rest of a game (unless a player *reconstructs*, which I won't go into here), but devastated areas may be recolonised straight away, usually by the missile-firer. In addition, if another missile happens to lie in a devastated area, it *chain-reacts* and blows up on its spot. This may, in turn, chain-react another missile. There is no limit to the carnage possible!

## STRATEGY

There is plenty of scope for strategy in the game. Certain areas, for example, are more easily defensible than others. To attack a city, you cannot choose a 1 on the die. When attacking mountains, a number higher than 3 may not be chosen, no matter how many armies are attacking. When attacking across sea, the defender is allowed two guesses at the number chosen. Mountains and seas therefore form natural defensive boundaries for empires. Also, it is important to establish

links, if possible, between two or more of a player's separate empires, as one large empire has many advantages over two smaller ones.

Diplomacy also forms an important part of the game. It is possible, for example, to 'rig' battles: the defender purposely chooses the wrong number so as to allow the attacker (his ally) to gain hostages and build missiles, to be used against a mutual enemy. However, when this happens, the whole rigmarole of selecting on the die must be followed through *just in case* the defender decides to double-cross at the last minute!

The Warlord really was a great discovery, and we spent many a happy weekend nuking Europe! By 1980, however, Mike Hayes was becoming a little bit tired of producing his game in small numbers and so we (Games Workshop) offered to manufacture a shorter version of the game as part of GW's own first range of boardgames. We changed the name to *Apocalypse* and its release was greeted with much the same enthusiasm as when I first came across it. Alas, it is now out of print, but no doubt will appear again, and so it should. G

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## VARIANTS

# The Games Clinic

## HIGH LOW

**Alan R Moon**

### Introduction

This game can be played using the cards from *Indiscretion* (Piatnik) or *Scan* (Parker Brothers). It is for 3–6 players.

### Prepare for play

Decide who will deal the first hand. The dealer should then shuffle and deal four cards to each player if there are two players, three cards to each player if there are four or five players, and two cards to each player if there are six players.

The dealer places the deck in the middle of the table. He takes the top six cards

from the deck and lays them out in a row face down. These six cards are called the Draw Cards. He takes one additional card from the deck and places it face up. This card is called the Up Card.

### The take

Beginning with the player to the left of the dealer, and proceeding clockwise around the table, each player takes one turn at a time.

Each turn, a player must do one of the following:

1. Take the Up Card.
2. Take one of the Draw Cards.
3. Call a suit. To call a suit, a player announces which suit he is calling, then turns over all of the face down Draw Cards of the corresponding suit. A player may not call a suit if there are no face down cards of this suit. After turning all the cards of the called suit, the player must take one of the cards he has just turned.

After taking a card, the player must replace it with the top card from the deck, unless there are no cards left. The Up Card is always replaced face up. A Draw Card is always replaced face down. A player may not take the Up Card if there are no cards left in the deck.

If there are three players, the take ends when each player has 12 cards. If there are four or five players, the take ends when each player has eight cards. And Draw Cards and/or cards left in the deck are removed from play.

The Up Card designates trump. If it is a 7, 8 or 9, there is no trump. If it is any other value cards, that suit is trump.

### The play

The player to the left of the dealer leads the first trick (he may lead trump). Play then proceeds clockwise around the table, each player playing one card in turn. A player must play a card of the same suit

that was led. If a player does not have a card of the same suit, he may play any card.

After each player has played one card, the player who played the highest ranking card in the suit that was lead takes the trick. Unless there is a trump suit and one or more players plays a trump card, in which case the player who plays the highest trump card takes the trick, regardless of which suit was led. Ace is always high.

When a player takes a trick, he places the cards face down in a pile in front of him. He then leads the next trick. Play continues in this manner until all the cards have been played.

### Scoring

At the end of a hand, each player counts up the number of points in his pile. Number cards are worth their face value. Jacks, Queens, Kings and Aces are all worth 10 points each.

If one player has the highest number of points, he scores 3 match points. If two or more players are tied for highest points, each scores 1 match point. If one player has the lowest number of points, he scores 3 match points. If two or more players are tied for lowest points, each scores 1 match point. In this manner, it can be seen that at least two players will always gain match points each hand: one for high and one for low.

### Subsequent hands

The deal passes to the left after each hand.

The first player to score 10 match points is the winner. If two or more players score 10 match points on the same hand, the player with the highest score wins.

### Scoring variation

The three other cards of the same value as the Up Card are worth 20 points each, instead of their normal value. G







## FORMEL EINS

**George Crawshay**

Although we enjoy **Formel Eins** considerably, our gaming group has never much liked the auction system in the rules, generally preferring to use the Tempo arrangement. For readers unfamiliar with Tempo, this is a game which uses the same cards as **Formel Eins** on a plain six-lane track. Instead of owning individual cars and obtaining prize money players have to try to forecast the first three colours past the post, and points are awarded for positions achieved by one's chosen colours with certain bonuses for correctness of the first, second and third places.

Just to complicate matters I tried out a completely different system recently, which worked rather well. In this system we reverted to using the prize money, but players took shares in the cars rather than owning them outright. This is how it works:

Markers are placed on the 14th, 28th and 42nd squares of the course (the full length of which is 56 squares). Each player has a total of 20 shares which he may allocate as he likes among the cars, but only five at a time. The allocations take place in secret, firstly at the beginning of the race before any cards have been played and subsequently at the end of the turns when the leading car or cars arrive at the markers. At the end of the race the prize money is shared out pro rata according to the shares owned in the cars.

This makes an interesting variant, with tension and suspense building up and some difficult decisions to be taken in the closing stages of the race. Quite often

players are seduced into taking shares on leading cars to the extent that the value of those in lower-placed vehicles turns out to be greater than that of the winner.

For example, a player might start by taking three shares in Black and one each in Green and Red. Green starts well and is the first to pass the marker on square 14. The player takes three more shares in Green but still favours Black, so takes a further two of that colour. By the time the next marker is reached the situation has changed drastically, with Orange racing ahead. Should he change tactics completely, plonk all five shares of the next allocation on Orange while it is still worthwhile, or keep his allegiance on Green and Black in the hope that others will crowd on Orange, so that even if it wins, the payout will be diluted while he may get a significant slice of the place prizes? GI

## SHOKO & CO

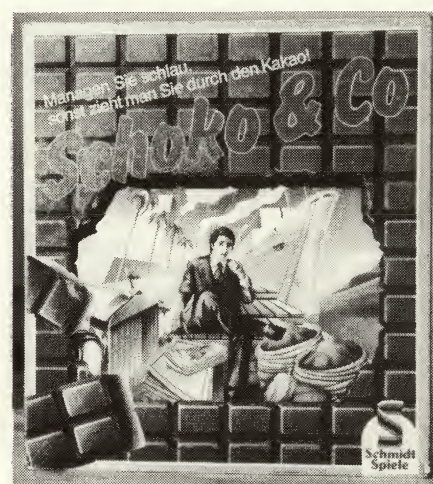
**Neil Wilson**

Firstly, an error in the translation of Express card Schlapp. Only one bookkeeper is reduced to end-processing only one contract, not all of them, as indicated in the translation supplied by Just Games.

Secondly, two variants for looking at the Event card.

1 Paying 15 000 isn't enough. The cost should be half the cost of *wertpapier* certificates (fractions rounded up to nearest thousand). For example, in August, the cost should be 51 000.

2 Don't let all players pay to look at the card in advance. In three or four player games, only allow two players, starting at the first player and proceeding round the table from there until two players have paid to look at the card. GI



## SCRABBLE TEASER

The winner of our first Scrabble Teaser, printed in GI #9, was Mr S T Keyworth of Lower Pilsley, Derbyshire. A copy of the Official Scrabble Words dictionary is on its way to him.

The correct solution was LINGUIST played through the vertical word CURVED, for a total points value of 86.



## CONVENTION REPORT

## Spiel '89

ESSEN

19-22 October  
1989

Brian Walker

Americans like to claim that their gaming events, such as Gencon and Origins, are the biggest in the world. Anyone who has been to Essen will tell you different. They will tell you Americans cannot count, or that they are either ignorant, or indifferent, to events occurring outside the confines of their own borders.

Fact: close on 70 000 people attended the Essen Games Fair during its four day duration. Such is its success that plans are afoot to launch a series of 'satellite fairs' in other European countries, the aim being that these will feed into Essen to provide a spectacular climax to the gaming year.

There was some doubt, not least in the minds of our writers, that this year's fair might be something of a anti-climax because of the relative lack of good games from the big guns of the German industry. Which just goes to show: what the hell do we know? In total there were something like 191 new games launched in Germany this year, which is probably 170 more than we were aware of. So if the generals failed to deliver the goods, there were always the foot soldiers. Let's hear it for the grunts!

## NOUVELLE CUISINE

The stand I always check out first at Essen belongs to Moskito Games (prop Karl-Heinz Schmiel). And sure enough he didn't disappoint. Certainly his attire did not disappoint. For there he was, decked out in a chef's outfit pretending to be Anton Mosimann, surrounded by enough pots and pans to fulfil the combined culinary needs of the Ritz, the Savoy, and then some. The cause of this bizarre



One of the more unusual meeting points

change of image was his new cooking game, *À La Carte*. But Karl-Heinz is no cheap showman, as anybody who has played his previous offerings such as *Die Macher* and *Suppenkasper* will attest. Compared to his other games, however, this new dish appears to be something of a light snack (a full review of the game appears on page 8).

But what of the future, Karl? What next? You've covered German elections (*Die Macher*), obscure wars in Bavaria (*Lieber Barisch Sterben*), gluttony and anorexia (*Suppenkasper*). Any plans to do a game based on landing on other players' property and paying rent?

'I have some new ideas,' he tells me. 'One especially about tourists, but it will be quite long, and on the scale of *Die Macher*, so it takes quite some time to get right.' Don't worry, Karl. We can wait.

From the man in the white coat to, well, the men in the white coats. In this case a bunch of loonies from near Heidelberg attempting a spot of role reversal by pretending to be psychiatrists (would you be able to tell the difference?). The cause of this metamorphosis was their new offering, *Therapie* (no relation), a quite wonderful looking card based game, which resembles the Swiss edition of

*Kremlin*. An English translation is promised, so expect to say hello to characters like Anna Rexie and Mr D Pression, very shortly.

If there is a criticism of German games, it is that they tend to be a bit lightweight, the notable exception being *Die Macher*. Attempting to redress the balance, at least in terms of real weight, is *Mare Mediteranean* from Jean Du Poel. It's a massive offering that comes in two versions: massive, and extremely massive. The latter, which arrives in an engraved wooden box, gave a new meaning to excess baggage when I checked in at the Lufthansa desk.

The cause of the bulk are the zillions of wooden pieces which come with the game, and the roll-up map. The artwork and component quality must rank as among the finest ever seen in a game.

The theme is reminiscent of *Civilization* and covers something like the same time span, though mercifully not the same *playing* time span. Although an English translation is available, there are at present a few problems with the rules. Unfortunately, Herr Du Poel only sells direct to the public. We will, however, be giving details of how to obtain this game once the rule queries have been sorted



out, and it has been reprinted (both editions sold out). The other star attraction was **Dicke Kartoffeln**: an economic game, which tackles the hitherto unknown supply and demand problems inherent in potato farming. Published by Abacus Games, we hope to be able to offer this blue chip game to our readers shortly. Of the other new discoveries, **Favoriten** and **Traber Derby** are both reviewed elsewhere in this issue.

### A FAIRY TALE FROM CO. DOWN

One of the nicest surprises at the Fair was seeing the smiling face of Bobby 'I'm a window cleaner' Evans, the brains behind **Deal Me In** (reviewed issue #5), which has proved to be one of the biggest success stories of the year. Being of the Emerald Isle, Bobby has not so much kissed the blarney stone, as taken it out to dinner and slept with it. At the sight of a press badge, Bobby does not go into auto-hype, though. If he gushes, he does so with genuine enthusiasm and pride at creating a commercial and aesthetic hit. It transpires that Bobby's creation has been turned into a crossword-style competition and syndicated to national newspapers.

A TV show based on the game is in the offing. The proceeds of these deals should buy more than a few Guinnesses. But what did yer man think of the Fair: 'It's just terrific,' Bobby enthuses. 'The German people have been just wonderful. We could have sold hundreds of games but that really wasn't the point of us coming. For us, it's a great showcase. A way of saying "Hullo".' Hullo, goodbye, and the best of British to you Bobby, be jay-sus.

Good luck too to Silver Bear Verlag, the brainchild of Oliver and Trevor Pepperwell, who, having despaired of the British market, set up shop in Germany and produced entirely German editions of their own games – **Bottom Line** and **Lady Luck**, together with a few from other British sources such as **Elixir**, and **Nessie Hunt**.

Languishing in a corner of the Silver Bear stand, somewhat ignominiously for such an important personage, was 'The UK's Leading Authority on Boardgames' and his game -----. On the port side of this tight ship was **Cup Fever**, a new race game based on the Americas Cup, emanating from New Zealand. Perhaps a legal theme might have been more appropriate, given the way in which this famous race was settled. Expect this craft to arrive on these shores shortly.



GI writer Philip A Murphy stops for a quick one.



Getting down to it with Abalone.





Intergame winners Bloodstock show the right pedigree:  
Left to right, Richard Clyne, Mick Haytack, Frieheilm Merz (organiser of the show), Denis Arnold and Andrew Whitely.

## 1966 AND ALL THAT

One of the most popular innovations at Essen has been the Intergame Tournament. This year there were 20 teams competing, including three from the UK. Representing this very magazine were yours truly, together with writers George Crawshaw, Philip A Murphy, and, for spiritual guidance, 'the Swami' (see GI issue #9).

The structure of the contest is very simple: each team member plays four different games, with different opponents each time. Points are scored according to position. The winner scores 5 points, then 3,2,1, down the line. The games chosen this year were **Pole Position**, **Ave Caesar**, **First Past the Post**, and **Der Ausreisser**.

The Austrian team were led by Gerhard Kodys, the amiable designer of **Pole Position**. As he told me before the tournament started, he was in a 'no win situation' regarding his own game:

'If I win, people say "Oh, you're the designer, of course you win," but if I lose, they think I'm an idiot.' As it happened, he came last. Upholding the family name though, was his wife Elizabeth, who won the trophy for best individual performance – one in the eye for those ignorant pigs who insist that women can't play games. Meanwhile, the editor of a famous games magazine came 64th. Star billing

must go to Mick Haytack and his Bloodstock team for taking first prize. Of the other UK teams, Pigbutton, headed by Clive Palmer, came 11th, while GI came a respectable (?) eighth. The event was such a success that plans are afoot to expand the tournament next year, with perhaps qualifying heats being held in the competing countries.

Organiser Peter Gehrman asks me to point out that foreign teams are not paid for playing games, as had been suggested previously in this magazine, but for travelling to play games. You tell me the difference.

## RAVE FROM THE GRAVE

One of the enduring highlights of the Fair is the flea market – the place where all those games marked R.I.P attempt to find, if not a new graveyard, then at least a new home. This year it was as busy as ever, though bargains were thin on the ground. Two copies of **Homas Tour** came and went instantly for 150 DM each (£50), **Railroader**, from Waddys, fetched 100 DM, and Niki Lauder's **Formel Eins** went for an unconfirmed 180 DM.

Those of you looking for a copy of Wolfgang Kramer's classic game, **Coup**, will be pleased to hear it is to be resurrected next year with a brand new theme, and revised rules.

The entire range of 3M Games made their usual ghostly appearance – shrink wrapped and unpunched. Where have they been all these years? No sign though, of **Trade** and **Energie Poker**. Under the guise of investigative journalism, I decide to take a peek under the counter to see if anything has escaped my attention. And what do I find, lurking in plain brown wrappers like porno videos at your local takeaway? Wargames! *Quel horreur!* The stigma. Being seen carrying a copy of **Luftwaffe** at Essen would be like getting caught reading *Satanic Verses* in a mosque. Trying to pursue a career in journalism with no hands could pose certain problems, so the offending item is dropped rather rapidly.

## IT CAN HAPPEN HERE

Wargames apart, Essen is about all types of gaming: role-playing, carrom, PBM, backgammon, chess, snooker, even **Subbuteo**, all sat comfortably under one roof. And why not? Who is to say that one form is superior to the other? The aim of Essen is to provide four days of fun for all gamers. Even younger members of the family weren't forgotten. The huge adventure playground saw to that. Of course there were those who carped at the 'commercialism'. Of course it's commercial. If it wasn't, how would the small companies and fanzines be able to rent a stand, with a potential market of 70 000



people, for a mere £70 for four days? The prestige of the event can be gauged by the fact that ace American designer, Sid Sackson, was interviewed on the prime time TV news (coincidentally, the translation was supplied by his compatriot, Alex Randolph). At this point we usually start frothing at the mouth and wondering why we can't do it here. Next year though, it looks as though we are going to have the chance with 'Mindgames 90', which was inspired by an editorial in this magazine. The organisers hope that it will

be the first step down the road towards a UK version of this extraordinary event. Let's hope the industry, and indeed everybody with an interest in games gets behind it.

But back to Essen and a special word to the man who made it all possible: Friedhelm Merz. And that special word is thanks. Thanks both to you, and all your team, for your courtesy, hospitality, and professionalism, above and beyond the call of duty. See you next year. **GI**

# A rookie's view

**Mike Siggins**

A friend of mine has a theory that suggests that people who overuse adjectives (particularly superb, excellent and marvellous) run out of words when it comes to describing something really special. Spiel '89 was proof that he is correct. I had the time of my life and pretty much floated around the show for three long days while still managing to miss things.

I guess overall it was down to a combination of excellent organisation, boundless enthusiasm, classy and wide ranging products, reasonable prices and the fact that it caters for (and is also tolerant of) every type of gamer. There are no definable cliques; families, collectors, wargamers, rolegamers, postal gamers, PBmers and, very noticeably, women all mix together with enthusiasm as the common denominator.

## TREATS

It is difficult to point out the game highlights as almost every stand held something of interest, but I should mention *À la Carte* (Moskito) the new game from Karl Heinz Schmiel of *Die Macher* fame, *Mare Mediterraneum* (Historien Spieleverlag), Jean du Poel's superbly made ancient trading game, *Dicke Kartoffeln* (Abacus), a fascinating game where you try to grow the biggest and best potatoes on your farm, a couple of very good horse racing systems and several lovely games from Reinhold Wittig's Editions Perlhuhn including *Hans Dampf*, which is, believe it or not, a traction engine race game.

Also spotted, and purchased, were *La Pen-tanque* (Editions Mazas), a game covering that fine French game and

*Henne Berta* (Haba) which, although really for the kids, has some of the very best components I've seen.

## DREAM TEAM

Essen is the gamer's dream event. If you are a collector as well, I'd recommend that you don't go unless you have hired a container truck to carry all your purchases home. Luckily, hardly any of the stands took plastic or that really would have been the end. As it was, Essen was seriously detrimental to the wallet. I bought over forty games and that was after much anguished restraint, and getting them all home was no fun as large cardboard tubes seem to be the 'in' container.

The big attraction for us cellophane-ripping types is that even if one buys a game that is a turkey, the pieces are still so beautifully made and packed it doesn't seem to matter too much.

The whole place is brimful of atmosphere. The top designers happily chat to the public, new products can be tried before buying and the sales staff are true enthusiasts. Often I went to pay for something, only to be shown at length how the game worked and, in one case, was personally presented to the designer.

## FINE BOXING

Another surprise was the quality of the amateur designs. Being familiar with the notorious 'Death Row' at Earls Court, I was amazed to see the standard of both materials and ideas being produced by these companies (*It is worth noting that Ravensburger provide a complete packaging service for smaller companies - Ed*). The German hobby also manages to support four or five impressive magazines and all were present with stands. Add to

## NEXT ISSUE IN GI:

**Sherlock Holmes**  
The game is afoot

**Civilization**  
The definitive guide

**Wolfgang Kramer**  
GI Interview

## WARGAMES

**Siege of Jerusalem**

**Europe Aflame**

## ROLEGAMES

**AD&D Spelljammer**

**Ghostbusters GBI**

**Child's Play**  
Rolegaming in the world of  
childrens' fantasy.

## COMPUTER GAMES

**Star Trek V**

**Total Eclipse**

**Decisive Battles of the American  
Civil War Vol 2.**

**Soccer Special**

all that a thriving games trading area and several second hand dealers, whose prices are kept low by competition (this makes a change), and you have it made.

I realise that I have gaming tastes that are likely to be heightened by the range of products at Essen, but I can't imagine that any gamer wouldn't get something useful from it. Spiel '89 was big, exciting and more than lived up to my expectations. It is a classic example of German organisation and the mix is spot on. If someone in the UK ever gets round to organising a similar event, then this should be their model. I can at last see why regulars such as Brian, David Watts and Derek Carver have been enthusing about Essen for so long. I guess this year saw thirty or forty British gamers present but it should be many more. Of course, something this good has to have one flaw. It was all in German, with no subtitles. Now where is that Linguaphone tape? **GI**



## GI INTERVIEW

# Sid Sackson

**Brian Walker**

Undoubtedly one of the star attractions at Essen this year was the American designer Sid Sackson, invited over from New York by what can best be described as the 'Friends of Sid Sackson Society'.

Sid is a somewhat reluctant hero; a sandpaper accent that belies a natural reticence, and unfailing politeness, of the sort one would associate more with the England of the thirties rather than the Bronx jungle of the eighties. One almost feared for him even at Essen – his fragile frame weaving among the dense crowds. The body and mind, though, showed remarkable resilience as Sid strode around the massive halls, determined not to miss a thing. And this after several lectures and TV interviews.

*You seem to be quite a hero in Germany.*

Yes. I'm in danger of getting a swollen head.

*What do you think about the games scene in Germany?*

I think this is the country where games are really appreciated. England is better than the United States for games, though I hear it's got worse these past few years.

*Wolfgang Kramer said to me earlier, that the games boom here has really only occurred in the past decade. He suggests it is a reaction to watching television, which is considered passive.*

That's very true. In Germany I hear that it's expected that parents will play games with their children, rather than sticking them in front of the television and forgetting about them.

*Do you see a future for boardgames in the US?*

I think right now Germany is the last outpost. Paradoxically I think what might help is if there is a recession, or a depression. People then wouldn't be able to afford all the overpriced electronic toys like Nintendo.



Sid (centre) meets the fans.

*Isn't games playing tied in to the quality of life, though? It is, after all, an intellectual pursuit. If you have a society producing junk TV, and junk newspapers, it follows that you're going to get junk games?*

I'm afraid you're right, and this says something for the quality of life in Germany.

*The past decade in the UK has seen more money being thrown around, albeit in fewer hands. The quality of life though, has plummeted, along with the quality of the games.*

Yes. You don't have that big rich/poor divide in Germany that you have in the States, and which under Thatcher, you now have in the UK. As you say, games reflect society.

*You've obviously been interested in politics for a long time, but when did you first start getting involved in games?*

I guess it was in first grade school. The teacher would hand out the page of a magazine and we were supposed to circle the words we knew. I was more interested in getting a path from one to the other. The first game I actually remembered playing was *Uncle Wiggily*. I messed around with it and made up some variations.

*How old were you at this time?*

Oh, I guess about six or seven. By the time I was eight I'd made up this war-game where the rabbits were fighting each other.

*Most people, that is players and designers, in the business it seems, were all taught to play games in their childhood by their parents, far more than the average child.*

That wasn't strictly true in my case. My parents weren't that much into games, though I can remember playing a lot of 500 Rummy with my father, and maybe a few others. This was in the thirties – the depression. My father was unemployed so we were moving around a lot looking for work. I didn't have time to make friends so I made up a lot of games to play by myself.

*When did you start thinking about getting games published?*

I designed a game called *Poke*, which I tested on my friends – by now I had some. *Poke* is a combination of *Poker* and *Bridge*. At that time *Esquire* magazine was featuring a game every month so I sent in *Poke*. They published it and paid me 10 cents a word which in those days – '46 I believe – was a lot of money. So I



kept sending them games but they never used anything else of mine. I then made up a Bridge variant called Slam, which was syndicated in Bridge columns throughout the States. Really though, I was just making up games for my own pleasure.

I guess my next break came when I was wandering round a department store and I saw this guy demonstrating his game. When he'd finished I started to talk to him. I told him I had made around 100 games. I think he thought, 'Oh no! Another nut'. But later he said I sounded sensible so he introduced me to his agents. This was back in '58. So I showed them a couple of games, and they didn't show me the door. When 3M started up, they contacted the agents who showed them one of my games. It didn't have a name at this point, so the agents dubbed it **Acquire**. They wanted a real serious business game as well, so I came up with **Executive Decision**. They also wanted a deduction game which was how **Sleuth** was born. Incidentally, that was a board game originally. As for turning professional, I only gave up my day job in 1970. So far we're still eating.

*How did Acquire evolve?*

It all started with Lotto, a game which I found very uninteresting. I liked the idea, though, of trying to get matching lines. So instead of numbers I had countries, represented by different coloured tiles, which grew when tiles were placed next to one another. But when different countries met, they fought, and the bigger country swallowed up the smaller country.

*So Acquire was a wargame originally?*

That's right (laughter). It was set in Europe. There was even one time where Finland conquered all of Europe. But then I changed it to a business game. I guess the rest is history.

*Back to Wolfgang Kramer; he was telling me earlier that, with a couple of exceptions, he comes up with the problem first, and then the theme. Is that the way you go about designing a game?*

Definitely. I come up with the mechanism first, though if somebody gives me a specific assignment then I work to that.

*You seem much more interested in the mechanism rather than thematic considerations.*

Yes. Now Alex Randolph on the contrary, is very much a theme man.

*He seems to me to be much more commercially minded. You appear to me to make games almost for your own pleasure?*

Sure. But I like to make money too (laughter). But I really can't do a game I don't like just to make a buck.

*What's your favourite game of the ones you've designed?*

I always pick three: **Acquire**, **Sleuth**, and **Focus**.

*What has been your most commercially successful game?*

The one I made the most money from was only around for three years and that was **Can't Stop**, which sold over one million copies. **Acquire** over the years has sold over a million. At least that's still going.

*You actually formed a games company yourself?*

Yes. That was Gamut of Games with Phil Orbanes, who's now with Parker Brothers. I don't think he's making up games anymore which is a shame because he's done some good ones. The best one I think was **Cartel** (also known as **Dallas**). I did some work with him on **Realm**, and **Infinity**. Just sort of helping out.

*Let's turn to your collection now. I've heard various figures mooted as to how many games you've actually got. What's the latest score?*

The latest score? I haven't actually had time to sit down and count.

*Take a guess.*

A conservative estimate would be about 15 000. Probably more, but I'll settle for that figure. That doesn't mean that I've got the complete box for every one of them. It's a question of storage.

*I can understand that.*

I throw the boxes out sometimes and just keep the bits. So I have complete information on a few thousand more games in this way.

*I hear your house in the Bronx has been broken into a couple of times.*

Yes, but at no time did they ever bother the games. They only took my wife's jewellery (laughter).

*You actually cannibalise the games, I understand?*

Sometimes I take parts of the games I have duplicates of. **Risk** is a great game for this. I've used **Risk** pieces in lots of games I've invented. I don't cannibalise ideas, though.

*What's your feeling about the way games companies change games without consulting the designer?*

I'm particularly unhappy about what happened with **Holiday**, which was published by Ravensburger as **Das Erbe des Maloney (Maloney's Inheritance)**. You can play it the original way, the only problem is that you have to look at the numbers all the time instead of just looking at the lines, as in the original.

*It seems astonishing to me that companies should change anything without reference to the designer.*

German companies are generally much more considerate in this respect than American companies, who pretty much feel once they take it over it's theirs, though 3M let me look at the games before they went out. In fact they goofed on **Executive Decision**. They got one of the rules completely back to front. Fortunately I spotted the error. To their credit they opened up all the boxes as they'd just finished packing and corrected them (such an action is not as automatic as one might think).

*I noticed you've brought several prototypes over with you. Are we likely to see any new games being published in Germany next year?*

Nothing definite, though the signs have been very encouraging.

*On behalf of games lovers everywhere, thank you for all the pleasure you've given us over the years.*

*Special thanks also to Ferdinand and Dagmar de Cassan for making this interview possible.*

GI

## TRANSLATIONS BANK

Mike Siggins is assembling a bank of translations of foreign games, so please send any translations you have, especially French and German ones, to Mike at 129 Ardmore Lane, Buckhurst Hill, Essex IG9 5SB.



## DESERT ISLAND GAMES

# Big decision



**George Crawshay**

We had hung on grimly, our party of dedicated gamers, while almost everyone else had left the crippled ship. We had been in the middle of a game of **Civilization** which looked as if it might end within the next few hours, and were not about to be put off that chance easily. But fate was against us; the captain had warned that we had less than thirty minutes to get in the lifeboat. With six people plus essential provisions in the boat there was space for just ten games, and I had the awesome responsibility of deciding which these should be.

Thirty minutes for such a task? Thirty hours would have been insufficient! Where to start? Come on, not a moment to lose. OK, first I'll decide on the sort of mixture; we must have a decent variety, so for that we need some categories – let's say business, racing, political/election, travel network, deduction, conflict and abstract. That encompasses most game themes. Now the balance. That won't be too difficult as I know my preferences, which are roughly in the order given above, so with such limited space it doesn't look as if abstract is going to make it.

Conflict, then. I'm not a true wargamer, so anything with dozens of bits of cardboard, small hexes and complex combat charts is out, but there are simpler games like **Borderlands**, **Targui**, **Confrontation** and **Conquest** which are great fun. Then there are the bigger and broader contests involving cash and politics as well as armed struggle such as **Warrior Knights**, **Reich** and **Blood Royale**, and I

would dearly like to take one of these. But I really have space for only one conflict game, and I must plump for the one which I enjoy most. **Apocalypse** (Games Workshop), formerly **The Warlord**, has the virtues of simplicity, excitement and a most ingenious attack system, so it just pips the rest.

## WHAT THE DEUCE!

With all the lotus eating in store for us on this island for which we are making, we'll need to have some sharp mental exercise from time to time, so a deduction game is essential. There isn't a wide range of this type so the choice is not too difficult. I'll discard the Sherlock Holmes and Baker Street type and concentrate on something simpler, which leaves me with **Cluedo**, **Goldraub in London** (what an amazing name for a game of deduction!), **Code 777** and **Sleuth**. The first has too great an element of luck; **Goldraub** I enjoy but it really is a formidable brain stretcher. I dither a long time between the last two as they are both excellent, but finally select **Sleuth**, which is such a neat game, a true Saxon effort.

Although I have put travel network after election in order of preference, there is almost nothing in it, especially considering the very fine examples available in the former genre. **Rail Baron**, for instance, with its grand board showing the railroad spread of the entire United States, and its well thought out pricing system; on a humbler scale but still very enjoyable, the freight carrying game **Auf Achse**; and of course, the classic **Railway Rivals** about which nothing further need be said. Alas, I have space for only one of this type. Considering the time we will have available there will be a need for the odd blockbuster to while away the hours and days. One of the problems of playing games designed on a grand scale is that the turns tend to lengthen as the game becomes more crowded and complex, leading to a certain tedium creeping in. With unlimited time available this becomes less important, and I have therefore decided to take **1830** (Avalon Hill), the best, in my view, of the Tresham series. This game needs the desert island



scenario to do it justice, and I am sure we will not regret its inclusion.

## ELECTION QUANDARY

When it comes to election games I am really in a quandary. **Mr President**, **Election**, **Kremlin**, **Il Parlamento** . . . I love them all. But I'm afraid that even these are not quite up to the name I almost hesitate to utter, as there is a chain of desert islands already littered with the game; but **Die Macher** has to be included for its all-round excellence and for the fact that it is a long game ideally suited for the sort of sojourn which we are facing. My other choice in this category is one which other shipwrecked gamers have so far ignored – **Campaign Trail**, which is a fun game with plenty of hard decision making and the bonus of a most ingenious cliffhanging ending.

Fortunately for the anxieties of my fellow passengers, who are beginning to exhibit signs of nervousness, my thoughts on racing games are somewhat more decisive. Not that there isn't a whole range of wonderful stuff from which to choose; **Speed Circuit** buffs will doubtless be horrified, but I still have a high regard for **Formula One**, which I discovered in Andorra of all places in 1964 in the original French version (it had just won the *Jeu de l'Année* in Paris), and which presumably inspired **Speed Circuit**'s inventor. There is a host of excellent smaller games such as **Formel Eins** and **Pole Position**, but they are not meaty enough for a desert island. I like **6-Day Race**, but must confess to some surprise at the devotion of its adherents. No, I have two clear favourites here: for the very cunning mechanics of its movement system which produces ex-



citing races with a great variety of results within a realistic set of odds, **Win, Place & Show** (Avalon Hill); and for sheer originality, a great set of tracks and, again, races packed with excitement, the Dutch cycle game of **Homas Tour** (Homas Spielen).

### MONKEY BUSINESS

If some of these decisions have cost me time and effort it is nothing to the dithering which goes on for the business category. **McMulti** (another extraordinary name), **Business/Fortune**, **Executive Decision**, **Broadway**, **Long-Short**, **Energie Poker** – the potential list is huge. As the ship gets lower in the water I vacillate hopelessly. In the end I choose three which have brought me enormous pleasure over the years. **Acquire** (Avalon Hill), my first truly original adult business game purchase (1968), still going and rightly so; **Trade** (FX Schmid), such a clever demonstration of market forces with minimal board and pieces; and **Dallas** (ex Cartel, not the Yaquinto product) with its marvellous mechanism of bonds which increase in value for final settlement yet which one has to use in order to stay in the game.

Time's running out. Help! OK, I've got my ten, but how about all those others I've not even mentioned? **Heimlich**, **Shark**, **Discretion**, **Metropolis**, **TV Wars** . . . oh hell, I'll grab a few more, they'll never notice. I rush to the boat, scramble in, but what's this? They're pushing the other games out, they're letting me take only ten, no room, too heavy – one by one they go under the waves. I clutch just one extra. Surely they'll let me take it? After all, the inventor's in the boat with us. But they're getting rather fed up now, and crossly they say we're already packed too tight. If the game stays the inventor will have to go.

Faced with this poser, I gibber with indecision. In the end reason triumphs – we must have a sixth player. Reluctantly I let the box slip from my fingers. Sadly I watch as **Showbiz** slowly sinks beneath the waves. G

## TRICKY

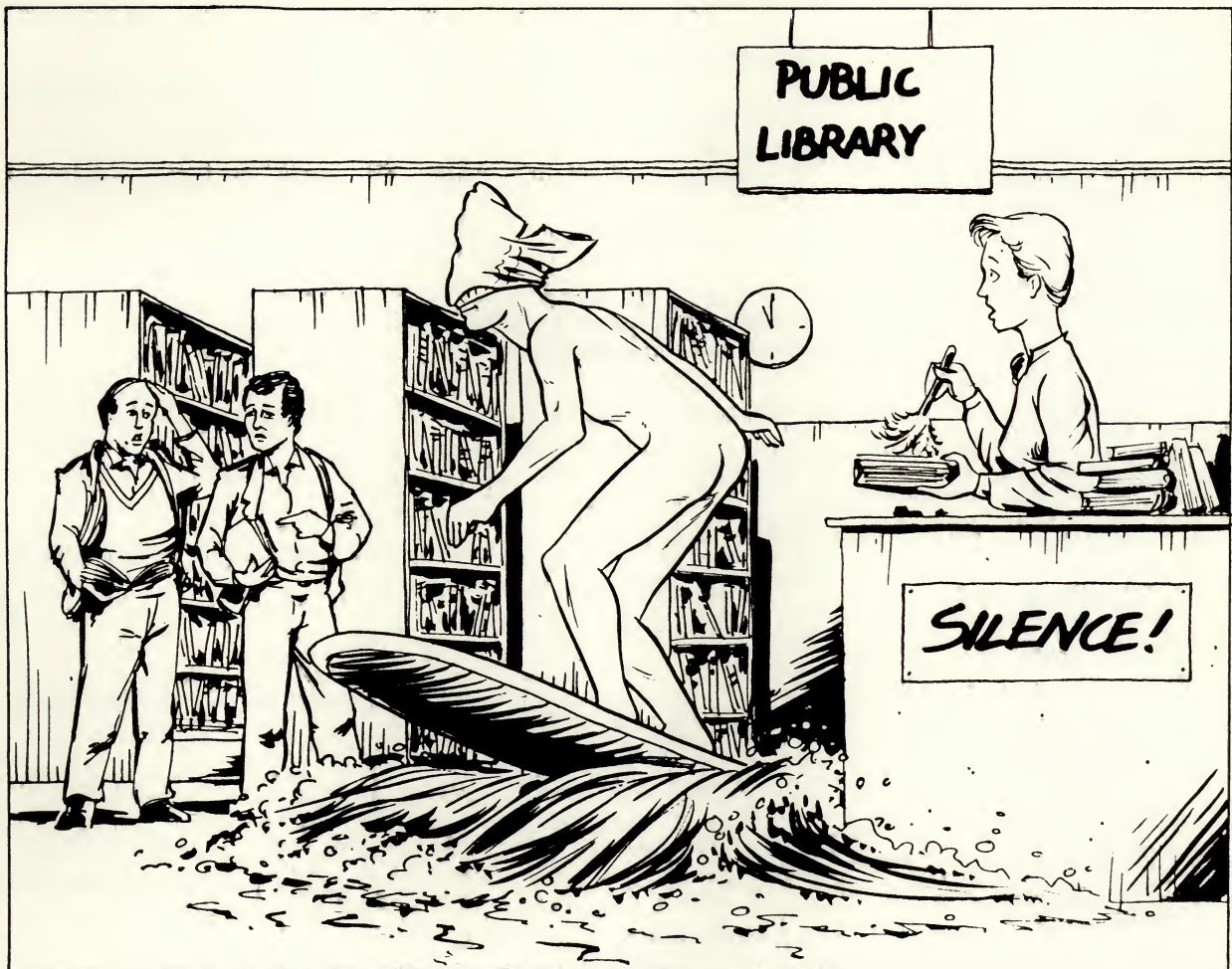
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# Readers' Revenge

## The first GI readers' survey

Having published 10 issues of GI from the comfort of our Ivory Tower, we thought it was high time that we let our beloved readers have a say on our content and style. We might even make a few changes if the feeling is strong enough. If you do not wish to mutilate your copy of GI, send a photocopy. And after we've scrutinised all the lovely data, we'll put all the returns into a sack and pull one out and send its writer a copy of **Favoriten**, one of our own favourites. And now pens out.

Q1. Which has been the best issue to date?

.....

Q2. Which article has been the best to date?

.....

Q3. Of the main contents, do you enjoy reading about:

- |                   |        |
|-------------------|--------|
| a) General Games  | Yes/No |
| b) Wargames       | Yes/No |
| c) Rolegames      | Yes/No |
| d) Computer Games | Yes/No |

Q4. As a percentage, how would you like to see the main contents balanced:

- |                |      |
|----------------|------|
| General Games  |      |
| Wargames       |      |
| Rolegames      |      |
| Computer Games |      |
|                | 100% |

Q5. Which, if any, of the main contents do you object to being in GI?

.....

Q6. Is there a topic you would like to add to the main contents?

.....

Q7. Of the regulars, do you enjoy:

- |                        |        |
|------------------------|--------|
| a) RIP                 | Yes/No |
| b) Desert Island Games | Yes/No |
| c) Forum               | Yes/No |
| d) Sniper              | Yes/No |
| e) News                | Yes/No |
| f) Role Call           | Yes/No |
| g) Rebound             | Yes/No |
| h) Classifieds         | Yes/No |
| i) Charts              | Yes/No |
| j) Variants            | Yes/No |
| k) Consumer Guide      | Yes/No |

Q8. Which, if any, of the regulars would you like us to get rid of?

.....

Q9. Is there any topic you would like to add to regulars?

.....

Q10. The regular I like most is

.....

Q11. The regular I like the least is

.....

Q12. Do you like the artwork in GI?

Yes/No

Q13. Do you like the style of humour?

Yes/No

Q14. Would you like to read more Strategy Seminars like Sharp Practices in issue 9?

Yes/No



Q15. List in order of preference other games magazines that you read:

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....

Q16. Where do you buy GI?

Newsagent

Games Shop

Subscription

Q17. Do the reviews influence your purchase of games?

Yes/No

Q18. Do the charts influence your purchase of games?

Yes/No

Q19. The best thing in GI is

.....

Q20. The worst thing in GI is

.....

Q21. I would like to see an article on

.....

Q22. My favourite game of all time is

.....

Q23. My favourite general game is

.....

Q24. My favourite wargame is

.....

Q25. My favourite rolegame is

.....

Q26. My favourite computer game is

.....

Q27. The one thing missing from GI is

.....

Q28. Do you play general games?

Yes/No

Q29. Do you play wargames?

Yes/No

Q30. Do you play rolegames?

Yes/No

Q31. Do you play computer games?

Yes/No

If yes, which machine(s) do you play on?

.....

Q32. My favourite games company is

.....

Q33. My favourite games inventor is

.....

Q34. Would you attend a national games fair if it was held in London?

Yes/No

Q35. Would you like a free game to be published in each issue of GI?

Yes/No

Q36. How old are you?

.....

Q37. Are you male or female?

.....

Q38. If you want to enter for the prize draw, please enter your name below:

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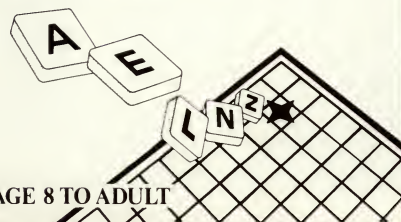
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# SNIPER

## Café triste

One of the great things about shows like Essen is that they provide an opportunity to meet the fans. The backbone of the mag, the salt of the earth, and so on, and so on. Of course, there are those who are not fans. The un-fans. We must meet them too. They must have their say. Determined to have his say is Roland Siegers, Field Commander of the Mattel battalion. Was it something we said, Roland old bean? Afraid so. It seems that our review of the current darling of the German scene, *Café International*, went down like a lead zeppelin at Mattel HQ.

'How can you write such a thing?' thundered Herr Siegers. 'Were you playing the game correctly?'

Before I can respond, the Field Commander has homed in on Ian Livingstone's review of *Jump the Queue* (issue #8) like an Exocet missile.

'How can you give this game four stars?' he demands to know.

The answer is – we didn't. We gave it three and a half.

'The first player to roll a six wins the game,' he maintains, moving his hand ominously towards a howitzer.

Fact: *Jump the Queue* does not contain a numeric die. In the midst of this barrage, who should wander over but Michael Grey from MB (USA), whose own game, *Easy Money*, got a panning in these pages even worse than the one which incurred the wrath of Herr Siegers. What was this then, a pincer attack? Not a bit of it.

'I think the review (of *Easy Money*) was a fair one,' opines the wonderful Mr Grey. 'It's not the sort of game that would appeal to your readers. My brief was to design a very simple game, and that's what I did,' he continues.

Back to Herr Siegers, now aiming a bazooka directly at my head: 'Look around you, everybody is playing *Café International*.' Indeed, this is true. As far as the eye can see, people are playing *Café International* – curiously reminding one of the time when the crowds applauded the Emperor's new clothes. Until one day, they stopped.

## Unholy trinity

After reeling shell-shocked from Mattel HQ, who should I bump into but Jeremy Shaw, designer of *Trinity*, recipient of a namecheck in issue #9, and star of a recent civil case at Lowestoft County Court involving Steve Nichols, editor of the defunct *Games Monthly*. Jeremy is less than pleased with our report of the events leading up to his appearance before M'Lud. To his enormous credit though, he avoids giving me the 'Glasgow nod', and indeed congratulates

me on the fairness of the article. What he is less pleased about, is our repeating certain comments by Mr Nichols which he claims are untrue. Fortunately, the disputed comments do not appear to warrant the intervention of m'learned friends.

## Daffé

Of course, no battle in the war of words would be complete without a contribution from the self-styled 'UK's Leading Authority on Board Games', Mr Jack Jaffé.

'Do you take counsel before you publish?' he enquires.

As a matter of fact, there are a team of briefs peering over my shoulder at this very moment. The sole purpose of their employment is to defend against writs served on this magazine by the UK's Leading Authority on Board Games. It seems that an item in this very column, concerning his appearance at a convention in Glasgow caught his eye, and almost persuaded him to try for a jackpot payout from the courts. Wiser counsel prevailed though, and instead he plumps for giving me a rather deafening piece of his mind, culminating in the ultimate insult: 'You're an amateur,' he bellows. 'An amateur.' (See also letter in *Rebound*, page 57).

## En Garde

Back home it's the turn of Chris Harvey Games to indulge in a spot of legal sabre rattling. The cause of Mr Harvey's ire is a press release sent out by this magazine, to all the American companies whose products he distributes. The gist of it is that we are unable to obtain review copies, press releases and so on from Chris Harvey Games. Would they kindly, therefore, send us said review copies, promo material and so on, direct?

An innocent request you may think. Why, not even a mention as to what we suspect is the *real* reason for the lack of co-operation from Chris Harvey Games; namely their involvement with *GRiM*, another games magazine (we can't really call it a rival). And yet, no sooner has this totally objective missive been dispatched, than in comes a fax from m'learned friends representing Mr Har-



Café International: serving sweet and sour at Essen



vey, threatening toil and trouble unless we issue an apology, a retraction, and pay loads of cash for costs incurred.

It would seem that since the Elton John, Jeffrey Archer and Sonia Sutcliffe cases, every Tom, Dick, and Chris thinks his name appearing in print, in a manner not to his liking, is simply a license to print money, or at the very least issue intimidatory threats in the knowledge that many publications, fearful of the aforementioned damages, would simply clam up at the mention of Messrs Sue, Grabbit, and Runne. And, let's face it, there are those spineless cretins in the press, to whom the mere mention of m'learned friends induces apoplexy, quickly followed by a craven apology. But then there are the others. The obstinate types. The trouble makers. The sort that would say shove your writ up a very specific part of your anatomy, and then set light to it. Glad we're not like that.

## We'll never walk alone

Back to Essen though, and the fans. For it is they who must have the last word. First off is Klaus Teubel, designer of last year's *Spiel des Jahres Barbarossa*: 'I like the magazine for its honesty,' he says, quickly pocketing the 1000 DM note I have just handed him. Fellow designer Wolfgang Kramer claims he is: 'taking English lessons' solely to be able understand the mag. Perhaps we could arrange to send the editor of *GRiM* on the same course?

Oliver Hoffman from *Welt der Spiele*, and Matthias Stobbe from *Das Spiel* in Berlin, both praise our review of *Café International*: 'You are the only ones to see through the hype,' claims Ollie. Matthias adds: 'Of all the magazines I get, I look forward to yours the most.' What, even more than *Amazonian Women Monthly* – a copy of which I once caught you perusing in a rather seedy looking establishment on the Kufurstendam?

## Brummie blues

'Somebody ought to drop a megaton bomb on Birmingham,' said a fellow guest. 'I thought somebody already had,' I countered. Such was one of many conversations which took place at the Midcon convention, held recently at the Royal Angus (Thistle) Hotel in that justly maligned city.

Perhaps, though, the reason for his destructive urge had more to do with the hotel's management, than a crusade against urban blight. The convention has been held at the hotel for several years

without any problems. Unfortunately the hotel was sold two days before the convention was due to start and new management were installed. It appears that the new management didn't want the likes of journalists, TV producers, solicitors, business executives, *et al*, spoiling their nice rooms. Especially as they were only there to play games, and spend money at the overpriced bar.

The first sign of the new Fawltyness came with the order that convention goers were not to wear 'offensive T-Shirts'. Barely had I changed into my 'Gamers Do it On the Table' polo neck before yet another commandment came down the mountain, this time insisting that 'games were not to be played in the bar' as it would 'put off their regular trade'. On the evidence available, unless the regulars consisted of the Invisible Man and his family, it was hard to believe such a trade existed. Accordingly, the order was ignored as promptly as it had been issued.

Still more to come; even in a modest hotel, it is usually possible to charge drinks, food, and so on, to your room. Not so at the new 4-star Angus Fawltyness. 'Company policy,' we were told. Strangely, this facility was available to 'normal' guests.

As ever, the workers in this scenario were innocent on all counts, and were politeness personified in carrying out these absurd commands from above.

The public relations coup was finally completed, when another visitor (an MD of a software house in real life), was refused room service, causing him to check out at almost midnight and seek alternative accommodation. Like many of those present, in his professional life he often has cause to stay overnight in hotels: 'I've been using Thistle Hotels for ten years, but never again,' he fumed. A sentiment shared by many, not least the Midcon Organising Committee who are already seeking a new venue for next year.

## Chain reaction

In order to find out what the 'youf of today' are up to, I often tune in to *Rapido*, a weekly pop program on BBC2.

This particular show features an interview with the pop group The Jesus and Mary Chain, during the course of which, Mr Mary Chain explains the group's origins: 'We thought all the records coming out were just crap, so we went and made our own'. A sound philosophy, and one several gamers at Midcon seemed to have picked up.

Quite a few smart looking prototypes were in evidence, most notably a game on pop music with nary a question in sight. Instead it presented a strategic/economic study of the pop business with hype factors and press launches, and so forth (*but the drugs, what about the drugs?* – Ed).

Our very own John Harrington had his excellent cycling game, *Breaking Away* (named after the Peter Yates film of a few years ago), while the Picts and the Huns fought it out on a prototype map of Europe. Let's hope the finished versions of these products appear before not too long.

## Moon hotel

Getting a thorough testing at Midcon was Alan Moon's *Acquire* variant which appeared in our last issue. Opinions on it were mixed, to say the least. Most of the experienced players took the view that it opened the game out too much and thus reduced the tension, while the novices welcomed the changes.

I put these view to the man himself: 'That's precisely the point. If you play with everybody making the optimum moves, then it's really a question of who picks up the right tile. What I tried to do was get away from that by making tiles more easily available, and reward the player with the best portfolio'. Take your pick. And watch out for our partnership *Acquire*, coming your way soon.

# QUOTES

## Spot the difference


'There are no votes for Worst Game as this usually produces a division of opinion and a stupid average result.'

'However we do have a Turkey of the year award. Vote for the game from any category that most disappointed you this year'. – Games Review Monthly's *editorial*, November issue.

## Oh, Mr Fawltly

'Order this Manuel (sic) today for just £12.95.' – *ad in GM Magazine*.

## Penis envy

'You're an *amateur* and, sadly, that doesn't offer much of a future for your organ, whose size and penetration are clearly in indirect proportion to your ego.' – Jack Jaffé in *Rebound*, GI #11. 



## Victory not in the Pacific

As a fellow journalist once put it: 'When there hasn't been a dozen rumours in the games business, it's been a quiet week'.

Current stars of one such rumour are Victory Games, who are now reported to be an ex games company. To check this out, we spoke to Tom Shaw at Victory's parent company Avalon Hill: 'This is just nonsense,' fumed Tom. 'It's true that a couple of people have left, but that's all.'

'As a matter of fact Victory have two brand new games in the pipeline. **Shell Shocked** is set for a December release, and **5th Fleet** will be shipped in January,' he told us. 'I have a strong feeling that these rumours started in California,' he confided. Disneyland perhaps? 'No, I think they came from another games company.'

Tut, tut. Who would say such a thing?

## Chart - TM

TM Games, the world's best distributor are to change their name of that of their associate company - Chart. This means that the combined products of both companies can now be ordered from one source. Or something like that.

## Bang that drum

Following the success of the GI readers in Essen, it was the turn of GI writer Steve Jones to be over the moon. Steve won the recent **1829** National Championship held at Longworth Hall.

The final was played out on a board featuring a new edition, entitled **1825**, which will be generally available next year. The tournament was such a success that this championship is to become an annual event.

## Beaming your way

New products from FASA include *Mercurial* - a new adventure written for **Shadowrun**. *Into the Shadows* is a 'braided anthology' also set in the **Shadowrun** universe. Due out soon from FASA, further expansions and scenarios to the game including one from Dave Arneson, co-creator of **Dungeons & Dragons**, in which the Shadowrunners must explore a dark labyrinth beneath a city...

Meanwhile in a game universe far, far away (or is that some other game I'm thinking of?) Trekkies will be interested

# NEWS

to know that **Enterprise Blueprints** will soon be available for *Star Trek: The Next Generation*.

## Eric the cleric in space!

Still floating among the stars, we come upon the latest from TSR, the legendary **Spelljammer** sourcebook for AD&D2, in which you can take your favourite characters up, up and away into the ether, with complete rules for fantastic fantasy spaceships. **Spelljammer** will be reviewed next issue.

## M'learned friends

Further to our story 'Publish and be Slammed' in issue #9, we can report that Steve Nichols won his court battle against Jeremy Shaw. The case centred on an ad for Shaw's game **Trinity** in *Games Monthly* which Shaw refused to pay for, claiming that Nichols had breached an agreement to show him a copy of the review prior to publication, and failure to print a 'right of reply' following the publication of the review. Shaw's counter-claim, citing harassment, was dismissed by the court.

## Battle cards

To mark the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Britain a new set of playing cards, featuring 54 different designs, have been published by InterCol. The featured artwork is by Bruce Riggelsford, an RAF man himself, based at the graphics department of the Headquarters RAF Support Command. What ho! The cards themselves are printed on jolly good quality stock. Roger and out, except to say they are available from InterCol.

## AHIKS

Acne trouble? Or are you simply too obnoxious to get anybody to play with you? We know the problems. But now, help is at hand. Thanks to AHIKS, your days of knocking over counter trays, and whingeing about die rolls are over. No need to worry about your looks, either. AHIKS is the acronym for the Avalon Hill Inter-continental Kriegspiel Society which exists to minimise encounters with the sort of gamers you'd run a mile to avoid, and to facilitate play-by-mail gaming based on

AH products. AHIKS also publishes an excellent quarterly magazine, *Dispatch*. For further details contact: Andy Grant, 36 Honeysuckle Gdns, Hatfield, Herts AL10 8PJ.

## Holy sourcebooks!

Mayfair Games are going for the world record of printed TM symbols by publishing **Justice League™** and **Batman™** sourcebooks for their **DC Heroes Role-Playing Game**. The former features an original cover by Kevin Maguire and Joe Rubinstein and chronicles the complete history of the longest running superhero group. About the latter, no more need be said since you're probably suffering from Bat-withdrawal symptoms already.

Also from Mayfair, a Role Aids supplement called **Monsters of Myth & Legend 2** provides AD&D stats for mythical creatures and deities from around the world.

## Turtle fever

It won't be long now before those cuddly pizza-loving rogues, the *Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles* get very big in this country, what with the live action film (due out in the Summer of 1990), the toys, the books, and the TV series.

Of course, you might know them better as the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, but apparently the BBC deemed such a word too provocative to be uttered in the presence of kids. Anyway, along with all this excitement, Palladium are keeping up the support for their game, with the latest supplement called **Truckin' Turtles**. They'll be bringing out a tie-in with the movie too, called **Turtles Go Hollywood**.

## The Chart

New releases from Chart this month include; **Siege of Jerusalem**, the game that took more years to produce than *Ten Commandments*. Price £28.55. No sooner than **Turning Point Stalingrad** is released than out comes the expansion kit, which amazingly is called **Turning Point Stalingrad Expansion Kit**, only £4.95. Fans of *Runequest* will be pleased to hear that the **Troll Gods** (£16.45) have now arrived on these shores and will feature in the next issue of this magazine, as indeed will all the other aforementioned products.



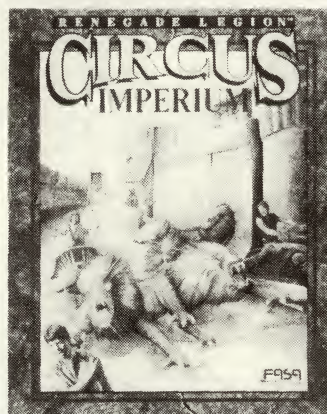
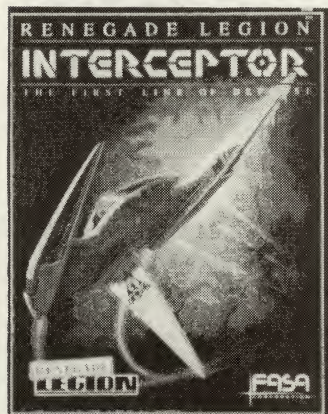


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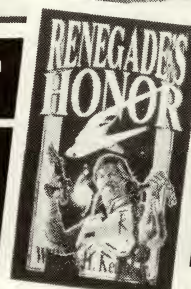
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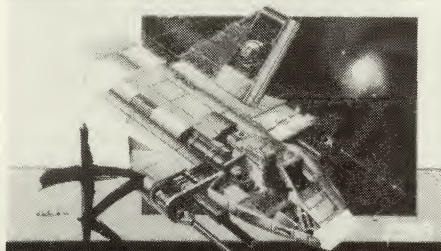
## RENEGADE LEGION™

FASA Corporation's **RENEGADE LEGION** game system now includes 4 separate *stand alone* games — *Interceptor*, *Centurion*, *Circus Imperium* and *Leviathan* — all of which can be integrated, if desired. They are backed up with an exciting Novel, Scenario Packs, Data Books, and a complete range of finely detailed Cast White Metal Miniatures.

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RENEGADE LEGION



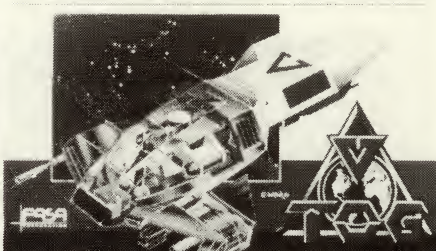
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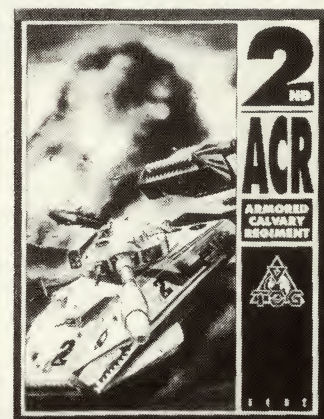
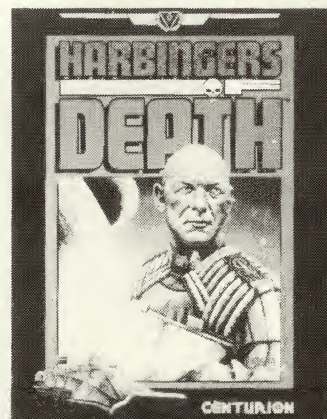


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## DESIGN NOTES

## W A R | G A M E S

## Storyboard Game

*Charles Vasey explains how he set about constructing **The King's War**, his game of the English Civil War.*

Play enough games for enough years and eventually the heretical thought occurs that you could do as badly as many designers. Link with this the thought that if designers persist in not giving you the game you want then you might as well design it yourself and you begin to have something.

I have designed a number of tactical games over the years and the English Civil War has given me a number of topics (probably because of its ample literature) but it was playing a game of **A House Divided** (Game Designers Workshop) that made me think of doing a strategic game on that war. This article is about that design process. I should point out at that I find original thought tiring and have to substitute detailed work – not for me the (apparent) ease of throwing off another brilliant design concept.

**A House Divided** is a pretty simple game in which mounds of dice are hurled in a dopey combat system. It also uses a box movement system rather than hexagons and I suspect the boxes are about all that survives of the original game. Its advantages are clarity, uncertainty as to what you can achieve and a system that punishes mistakes.

Having been taken with **A House Divided** I tinkered with some initial design work and soon decided that, although many wargame designers can, I cannot design without some long term view of what happened in the original campaign. So I dug out two books (no sense in going overboard on the old re-

search since it's concepts we need at first). I used Wedgewood's *The King's War* for the first draft and then cross-referenced with Young and Adair's *The English Civil War*. I also used lots of sixteen-column paper. Each column covered one month and each row a Royalist or Parliamentarian commander. Month by month, source by source I noted their doings. I also prepared similar sheets for army numbers (to track recruitment and desertion statistics).

## STORYBOARD

The sixteen-column paper (which I call the storyboard) immediately gave me an idea of the tempo of the War. It was surprisingly bloody, with plenty of battles (compared with the professional warfare of the period which had more combat avoidance). It was also noticeable that campaigns were usually about four months long with most armies and leaders doing nothing (in the sense of marching around) most of the time. Storyboards also provide the basic data, as I have already noted, for recruitment and desertion figures. I was soon able to identify the rise of numbers and collapse with war-weariness. I determined that by applying this principle the war could be brought to an end naturally (by both sides running out of steam). The storyboard provided details of speed of movement and siege statistics. One could also play through a few campaigns on the map I had drawn up to see how both sides interacted and get valuable ideas for the rest of the game rules.

The storyboards also split the war into a number of key segments, which in the end I decided to conform to Wedgewood's chapters. Each segment was about five to seven months long and my aim was to make that playable in about three hours (I hate great games that can never be finished, so decided to settle for a moderate game which could be completed). Some

players have played all the scenarios as a campaign game with Parliament so far holding the laurels, I understand.

If I may summarise the normal American boardgame: one builds a big stack which in turn jumps on an enemy stack. This enemy stack, which appears too stupid to get out of the way, then fights a battle which ends with lots of retreats. Elsewhere on the board other stacks slumber, leaving their chums to a beating. The storyboards indicated that whatever this typical game was, it was not the English Civil War.

## KNOW WHAT I MEAN, HARRY?

In the War both sides had numerous armies, some large forces were formed but they seldom did a great deal and neither side calmly awaited their fate if they felt themselves threatened. They also had a habit of ducking and weaving like Frank Bruno. A bit of thought produced a system, called Break Contact, where there was a good chance (modified by leader quality) of avoiding combat either by running away or because one had moved anyway (no aerial reconnaissance here).

A small army may be able to avoid combat, but did this mean the main forces had nothing to do? No, it seemed to me that in the War armies attacked to clear areas. If these areas were not defended then they were absorbed into the political network of the moving army. So armies can avoid combat but that may lose them local adherents (much the soldiers care!). It became obvious that the key thing was not winning battles but winning territory (with all the attendant resources). So each movement box was given a status (Royalist or Parliamentarian) with a double sided counter in the prevailing colours.

Standing back from the map one saw the bands of control standing out by the col-



our of the control counters. Laying this out and running some historical moves demonstrated that the various armies spent most of their time covering territory (usually 'marked' by an opponent). Things got hot when one army cut loose and tried to double-up on an enemy force before the enemy could respond (Prince Rupert's speed making him popular here). Armies could spend their time moving or taking control of the countryside and a handy little move tariff was constructed and tested to give the right speed of capture based on historical campaign results.

In addition, non-moving armies were given the opportunity to intercept moving forces. This meant a single army could cover a lot of territory by preventing enemy forces moving into adjacent boxes (a movement box covered about fifty by fifty miles). Now the Earl of Essex was in his element because while he looked like he was doing nothing we all knew he was blocking the approaches to London (and very effectively I may add). In one recent game Prince Rupert blocked the route from York to the Tees and held off a Scots army from the North, the Eastern Association marching up from the south and Thomas Fairfax coming out of Hull. With the central position he could hope to hold off all of them. Suddenly the importance of fortress towns became obvious (especially the Royalist centre at Newark). There was also a premium for good strategic positioning with one army doing the job of several.

### RUPERT BEARS ARMS

It was a short step from having non-moving stacks of units able to react (either by breaking contact or intercepting) to forcing interaction on the players by making the movement phase consist of each player alternately moving stacks. This gives a sense of action-reaction to the game. Rupert goes north, so Essex goes west, that frees the King, but if he goes west that releases Manchester who heads north where Newcastle and Leven have been sparring over the Tees!

An unsuspected effect of this was that the military map changed after each stack's move because when the stack moved it would exert different interception patterns and previously covered routes might become free. It also stopped the eerie co-ordination so beloved of gamers where armies miles apart converge in perfect style. Now before your second army moves the enemy can respond (life's like that, try punching someone and see if he does not throw a counter-punch before you get your second one in).

So what about those wacky combat results so beloved of the standard boardgame? A swift analysis of the actual battles produced the interesting point that losses were seldom heavy but they were often about the same despite the size of forces committed. Large armies tend to stalemate where smaller armies can be wiped out. The result was a simple CRT giving maximum 'normal' losses of 4000 men with a possible extra 1000 loss if the victorious cavalry 'turned in'. I did not want too complex a system but I felt that the difference between cavalry and foot was worth simulating, so there is a foot combat and a horse combat with the joint result giving the final result.


Big victories may cause desertion to the winning side but they will not win the war in an afternoon. All they do (apart from remove enemy units) is possibly take control of local areas and leave the defeated army discomfited for the rest of that month. Exploiting victory is not, and was not, easy but it consists of first bashing or chasing off the defending army and then seizing control of territory. With no defending army the victors can operate in smaller forces concentrating on overawing the local population and encouraging 'voluntary' contributions to the War Effort.

### PARLIAMENTARY POGROM

The regional feel of the War was produced by recruiting units by county or region and having the units the counties produced biased in line with historical loyalties. Wales continues to raise large Royalist armies and if captured by Parliament gives few units to its new rulers. The Eastern Association and the West Riding are good Parliamentary recruitment areas. Armies which operate a long way from base are not eliminated but they will find it hard to replace desertions. In addition, certain leaders were treated as 'regional' which means they can only command troops of their region and will not give them up to other regions' commanders. One could not avoid generals like Newcastle and Manchester because even if they were not great movers and shifters of men they were local grandees and could command loyalty and raise armies. (Boardgamers just love to reshuffle armies as if constituted of automatons).

The problem of the all conquering megastack was solved in two ways. Firstly, many commanders lack the ability or clout to command large forces so they had stacking limits applied. In addition, to reduce activity to an accurate level I used an artificial limit on activity (money, time, supplies?) with the larger the stack

the disproportionately larger cost to activate. Now one had to think whether one big costly stack, which the other side might avoid, was worth using. Since the real generals did not do this I hope most gamers will not (although they are free to do so if they want).

That is **The King's War**; it is far from perfect but it has I think solid play value within a historical structure. It has also managed to simulate a number of manoeuvres which most other games have failed to cover (especially marching and counter-marching). I feel it puts one closer to the actual commander than most strategic games but I would admit its target is the gamer interested in history. With 700 copies already distributed **The King's War** must be one of the more successful game kits, but I reckon there are several thousand potential sales for the designer/player who comes up with a 'fast play' system that is historical. It could be you! 

*The King's War is available direct from the author, price £8. See the advert in the Classified section for details.*

## GAMERS IN EXILE

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## STRATEGY SEMINAR

# Beating the odds

*Ralf Kahlert gives you the hard facts on your chance of making it with that major invasion in Britannia.*

Okay, you've read the excellent strategy article for **Britannia** in GI #5. You have developed a master plan. You know exactly where you want to go and why. But . . . your invasions get clobbered and you lose a lot of crucial battles. After a few moves you have to abandon your ingenious master plan and fight for survival instead.

So, whose fault is it? Are the dice to blame? Or were the odds never really in your favour anyway? Read on . . .

There are two ways of figuring out what your chances are of winning with, say, two Roman armies against a normal army defending in a hiland. You either play a lot of games of **Britannia** and judge the odds by experience, or you can calculate the probabilities in advance, which I have done for a few cases. The following tables may be of help to **Britannia** players in judging the chances of winning their attacks.

## How to read the tables

Let's stay with those two Roman armies trying to rid a hiland area of some barbarian army. You can look up their chances in table 4b. The Romans' chances of winning are 85%. Winning means there's at least one army left and the opposing army is completely eliminated. The chances for the barbarian army of eliminating both the Romans *and* surviving are just 12.5%. In the last column you can look up the chances for mutual elimination, which in this case is not very likely at 2.5%.

Those odds are calculated without taking into account the possibility of retreat. So it is assumed that all armies stay and fight until they either win or are eliminated. During a game you could of course retreat if you get unlucky in the first rounds of combat. Consequently the chances of

some of your armies surviving (but not winning) a battle are a bit better than indicated in the tables.

## Some observations

If your objective is not to conquer an area but rather to deny its possession to your opponent you can add the chances of mutual elimination to your chance of success.

Armies accompanied by a leader are almost as good as Roman armies. The only difference is that they are easier to hit than the Romans. It is a little bit easier to at-

tack hiland areas with armies accompanied by a leader than with Roman armies.

Consider a battle with an equal number of armies on both sides: the higher the total number of armies involved, the smaller is the chance of mutual elimination (see table 1a and 1c).

And finally, as a rule of thumb, it greatly improves your winning chances if you have a superiority of 2:1. But I suppose you suspected that even without some self-proclaimed expert telling you . . . **GI**

## THE TABLES

### KEY

A, B = Normal armies

H = normal army defending in a hiland

R = Roman or cavalry army

L = Normal army accompanied by a leader

### BASE CHANCE OF A HIT

A hits B: 33%

R hits A: 50%

A hits R: 17%

A hits H: 17%

H hits A: 33%

R hits H: 17%

H hits R: 17%

L hits A: 50%

A hits L: 33%

L hits H: 33%

H hits L: 33%

L hits R: 33%

R hits L: 50%

TABLE 1 NORMAL ARMIES vs NORMAL ARMIES

a	A	B	Mut elim
	40%	40%	20%

b	AA	B	Mut elim
	88%	8%	4%

c	AA	BB	Mut elim
	47%	47%	6%

d	AAA	B	Mut elim
	97%	2%	1%



**TABLE 2 NORMAL ARMIES vs ROMAN ARMIES**

a

A	B	Mut elim
14%	72%	14%

b

AA	R	Mut elim
56%	38%	6%

c

AA	RR	Mut elim
10.5%	90%	8.5%

d

A	RR	Mut elim
1%	98%	1%

e

AAA	R	Mut elim
81.5%	15.5%	3%

**TABLE 3 NORMAL ARMIES vs ARMIES DEFENDING HILAND**

a

A	H	Mut elim
25%	63%	12%

b

AA	H	Mut elim
68%	27%	5%

c

AA	HH	Mut elim
22%	74%	4%

d

AAA	H	Mut elim
90%	8.5%	1.5%

e

A	HH	Mut elim
3%	95.5%	1.5%

**TABLE 4 ROMANS vs ARMIES IN HILAND**

a

R	H	Mut elim
45.5%	45.5%	9%

b

RR	H	Mut elim
85%	12.5%	2.5%

c

RR	HH	Mut elim
48%	48%	4%

d

RRR	H	Mut elim
96%	2.5%	1.5%

e

RRR	HH	Mut elim
57%	40%	3%

**TABLE 5 NORMAL ARMIES vs NORMAL ARMIES WITH LEADER**

a

A	L	Mut elim
25%	50%	25%

b

AA	L	Mut elim
81.5%	12.5%	6%

c

AA	LL	Mut elim
26%	63%	11%

d

A	LL	Mut elim
2.5%	95%	2.5%

e

AAA	L	Mut elim
97%	2%	1%

**TABLE 6 NORMAL ARMIES WITH LEADER vs NORMAL ARMIES IN HILAND**

a

L	H	Mut elim
40%	40%	20%

b

LL	H	Mut elim
88%	8%	4%

c

LL	HH	Mut elim
47%	47%	6%

d

LLL	H	Mut elim
97%	2%	1%

e

L	HH	Mut elim
8%	88%	4%

**TABLE 7 ARMIES WITH LEADER vs ROMAN ARMIES**

a

R	L	Mut elim
50%	25%	25%

b

R	LL	Mut elim
12.5%	81.5%	6%

c

RR	LL	Mut elim
63%	26%	11%

d

RR	L	Mut elim
95%	2.5%	2.5%

e

R	LLL	Mut elim
2%	97%	1%



## REVIEWS

## R O L E | G A M E S

**GURPS  
CLIFFHANGERS**DESIGNED BY  
**BRIAN J UNDERHILL**PUBLISHED BY  
**STEVE JACKSON**

PRICE £10.99

\*\*\*

The pulps are an obvious background for rolegames. They were episodic, violent, concerned with adventure and action, and generally lacking in the more subtle and refined literary virtues. Yet for some reason this genre has never really caught on too well. TSR tried the obvious, with the now deleted *Indiana Jones* rolegame. I was probably the only person who rated it better than turkey level, and even I was annoyed at the way the system went to absurd lengths to simulate Indy's miraculous ability to stay alive. *Justice, Inc* applied the Hero Games system to the genre quite successfully, but didn't exactly blaze a trail across the firmament.

Now the ubiquitous **GURPS** has been applied to the two-fisted, square-jawed heroes of the twenties and thirties. I doubt it'll break the mould, but then **GURPS** packs aren't really designed to.

The book begins with an overview of the era. The author's history is competent, though he is in the main treading ground covered by previous games, including *Call of Cthulhu*. Once politics, technology and transport have been briefly dealt with, we get the largest chunk of the book. Here we take a whistle stop tour around the world, with ten main sections covering the most important nations and places. The emphasis is firmly on adventure ideas in this section, with frequent sidebar hints on how each setting can be used to generate scenarios.

'The Hero' covers the usual expansions to the **GURPS** character generation system, providing standard character types such as 'Private Investigator' and 'Archaeologist' with appropriate advantages, disadvantages and skills. There's some detail on jobs and income (as if a pulp hero would *work* for a living!) followed by some weaponry and vehicles to add to those in the **GURPS Basic Set**. The section on gadgets, which

follows, covers the invention of all those convenient scientific nick-nacks, and includes a neat optional rule allowing scientists to carry around a 'Gizmo' – an unspecified device which only gets defined when the scientist needs it!

The rest of the book covers scenarios and the **Cliffhangers** campaign, an easy job given the relatively limited range of plots involved in this kind of entertainment. The suggested approach is that of a serial, where every episode ends on a cliff-hanger. There are practical problems to taking this approach in a rolegame, but it shows willingness on the part of the author to find ways to capture the unique style of the genre. The scenario which rounds off the book leads in to a series of scenarios to be released separately.

Overall, the artwork is weak, but the material is up to the usual **GURPS** standards. If I wanted to play a game set in this period, I'd be hard pressed to choose between this and *Justice, Inc*. It's a pity the Hero Games system and **GURPS** are so similar, because ultimately the choice would rest on which of the two systems you prefer.

*Paul Mason*

**CHAOS IN  
KANSAS**GURPS HORROR/  
CLIFFHANGERS SCENARIODESIGNED BY  
**JAMES R HURST**PUBLISHED BY  
**STEVE JACKSON**

PRICE £4.50

\*\*\*

Although billed as a supplement for both **GURPS Horror** and **Cliffhangers**, this short book of two scenarios set in Liberty,

Kansas in the 1920s contravenes virtually every **Cliffhangers** rule. It's strictly supernatural fare, and requires the cerebral approach beloved of *Call of Cthulhu* investigators rather than **Cliffhanger's** gung ho upper cut to the jaw of the devious foreign villain. That said, the two scenarios are rather good, and would certainly fit right into a *Call of Cthulhu* game. The first is structured exactly like a CoC adventure, although the evil cultists are good old fashioned Satanists rather than followers of Lovecraft's Old Ones.

Researching in the right places, and asking the right questions will lead the player characters to the explosive (in a rather unpleasant sense) climax. The feel of early seventies horror (late Hammer and early Amicus) is reasonably well captured, especially in the names given to the non player characters.

The second scenario involves the IWW – the Wobblies – who also popped up in Chaosium's *Great Old Ones Call of Cthulhu* supplement. Here a little more is made of the organisation, in a strange tale of haunting that is supposed to be played at least partly tongue in cheek. If nothing else, this scenario is notable for having a ghost who is resistant to exorcism because he is an atheist!

All in all, the package delivers value for money, including a description of the town of Liberty which might come in useful. Don't bother with it if you're looking for a **Cliffhangers** adventure, but if you're running a horror game set in the twenties, it'll do the job fine, and could easily be applied to any game system other than **GURPS**.

*Paul Mason*



# GURPS WILD CARDS

DESIGNED BY  
JOHN J MILLER

PUBLISHED BY  
STEVE JACKSON

PRICE £11.99



For those who haven't read the *Wild Cards* books, they deal with the arrival of an alien virus on earth, and the adventures of the superhuman 'Aces' and deformed 'Jokers' that this xenovirus creates. Now with the advent of this worldbook for **GURPS Supers** this background can be used for superhero campaigns.

As a fan of the original books, I found this worldbook a fascinating read. The author is one of the people responsible for the original *Wild Cards* novels, so the atmosphere is identical from the moment you start to read.

## THE VIRUS

The early parts of the book are given over to a history of the Earth from 1939 (the point at which the *Wild Cards* Earth starts to differ from our own) to the present day, and a detailed analysis of the Wild Card xenovirus. Both sections are more than adequate, providing a wealth of detail without reading like textbooks. It is these two sections which set the gritty, realistic feel of the 'Wild Cards' world, which is just as imperfect and mismanaged as our own.

## ROYAL FLUSH

Leaving these first chapters we come to the meat of the book: an A to Z of characters from the novels. This section really is quite something, with every major character, and just about all the minor characters, from the books being covered in startling amount of depth.

The strength of **GURPS** is the detail in which characters can be created, and the *Wild Cards* crew have not been neglected. Each character is given the usual advantages, disadvantages and personality quirks with which **GURPS** referees will be familiar. This elevates the characters from being mere collections of skills and superpowers to being characters in the fullest sense of the word. This is the strongest point of the system: far too often, non

player characters in superhero games are merely a costume and a power or two. These non player characters are worthy of inclusion in anyone's campaign.

## NEW YORK SLIPS

Beyond the character chapter the standard starts to slip a little. The New York of the novels is glossed over in a few pages, without even a single map of the area or of any of the clubs and restaurants so important to the original stories. This is a disappointment after the high standards which precede the location descriptions and is without a doubt the low point of the worldbook.

Bypassing a perfectly functional chapter on aliens, the book rounds off with a well thought out chapter on gaming in the *Wild Cards* world. Perhaps the most impressive aspect of this section is the character generation rules, which provide several different methods of simulating the effects of the xenovirus, including an interesting option of letting your players play themselves, and discovering through play just how the xenovirus has affected them.

While being a fine product in most respects, this book is marred by the feeling of incompleteness which pervades the book. While the character section is a triumph, I had the feeling that detail from other chapters had been sacrificed to leave room for all the character descriptions, while some of the lesser characters could have been omitted at no detriment to the chapter.

## MORE TO COME

Another point to be aware of is a small note in a side bar which states that there will be at least two more sourcebooks to add to this one. As a referee will need to own the **GURPS Basic Set**, and **GURPS Supers**, before being able to use this book, I can't help but feel that the majority of gamers will be put off by the outlay needed for this campaign world.

The Earth of *Wild Cards* is a fine place to game in for people who want to get away from the silly names and costumes that dominate mainstream superhero games, but be prepared either to have read several thick novels to flesh out the rather wispy background included in this book, or to buy the subsequent volumes in the series as they become available.

Mike Jarvis

## CHARTS

### Rolegames

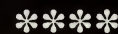
- ① Monstrous Compendium Vol 2 (AD&D2, TSR)
- ② AD&D 2nd Ed Player's Handbook (TSR)
- ③ Monstrous Compendium Vol 1 (AD&D2, TSR)
- ④ Empire of the Witch King (MERP, ICE)
- ⑤ Great Old Ones (Call of Cthulhu, Chaosium)
- ⑥ AD&D 2nd Ed Dungeon Master's Guide (TSR)
- ⑦ Basic D&D set (TSR)
- ⑧ Shadowrun (FASA)
- ⑨ Champions (ICE)
- ⑩ Masks of Nyarlathotep (Call of Cthulhu, Chaosium)

Chart supplied by Virgin Games.

## Star Ratings



First class game. Hall of Fame material



A good game, even if the subject doesn't appeal to you



Competent but nothing special



Not recommended unless you're especially interested in the subject



A true turkey



## SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS

### GURPS SUPERS SCENARIO

DESIGNED BY  
AARON ALLSTON

PUBLISHED BY  
STEVE JACKSON

PRICE £4.50

\*\*\*

So, a group of super kids are causing havoc in your town, right? It's time for you to don your best leotard and get out there on the streets to stop them. But is it really worth the effort? Well, while the

plot is hardly earth-shattering, this **GURPS Supers** adventure does have a few things going for it, so bear with me. Firstly the booklet is crammed with hints for referees who may be having problems (we all know players who just don't do what you're expecting!). Indeed, just about every part of the adventure is accompanied by sidebars designed to help the referee over any rough ground, an attitude that more companies could adopt. Secondly, it includes a comprehensive list of inanimate objects just right for smashing, throwing or breaking through! This may seem a small point, but it's amazing how many superhero products avoid the subject of pointless destruction! Finally, the background is superbly detailed. Every event has a solid history of previous events leading up to it. This further provides the basis for a series of suggestions that can provide several sequel adventures.

However, it's not all sweetness and light. As mentioned previously, the plot itself leaves something to be desired, relying as it does on a series of slugfests with little scope for other actions. While I would say that most superhero gamers (myself included) enjoy a good bout of senseless violence, I do feel that it takes more than a string of combats to make an enjoyable adventure. My other reservation is that the book goes to great pains to help the novice referee, the adventure also includes several three way fights between the players and two rather large groups of superpowered non player characters. I feel this could prove a little tricky for a beginner to handle. On the whole a reasonable effort, but be prepared for a little hard work.

*Mike Jarvis*

## SUPER SCUM

### GURPS SUPERS SUPPLEMENT

DESIGNED BY  
MARK JOHNSON

PUBLISHED BY  
STEVE JACKSON

PRICE £6.99

\*\*\*

The subtitle says it all: 'Awful adversaries, fiendish foes and powerful punks'! Obviously this is a book of non player characters from the wrong side of the tracks, for use with **GURPS Supers**, but is it any good?

First impressions aren't particularly favourable: the cover sports artwork that is somewhat less than inspired, while the contents are laid out in a format that rapidly becomes tiring to the eye, as you flip through page after page of characters presented in an identical format. Admittedly, what I found to be a dull layout, others may find to be a godsend, due to the uniformity of each villain's entry.

Leaving this aside we come to the contents, and thankfully this is where the book really scores. The 27 characters are covered in the sort of detail that **GURPS** players tend to give their own characters. Certainly this makes these bad guys more than just a flashy costume and catchy

name. While the majority of the villains are 500 point characters, each is provided with notes designed to allow the referee to recalculate a particular character to suit his campaign without too many headaches. Besides the usual attributes, skills and powers that you would expect, each entry also includes a section detailing the character's preferred method of operation, and how he or she would best fit into a campaign. As well as the supervillains, four nefarious organisations are presented, along with a few non-powered thugs.

While hardly being indispensable, this is certainly a useful book for **GURPS Supers** referees. We all know the feeling of trying to get a scenario ready at the last minute, and this book is a definite labour saving device for those times, or a springboard for ideas when you're short of a plot. As with any product of this type, referees of other superhero games may find it worth considering as an addition to their library.

*Mike Jarvis*

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VESSEL COMPENDIUM 1

## ADVENTURER CLASS

VESSEL COMPENDIUM 2

## PURSUIT CLASS

SPACEMASTER  
SUPPLEMENTS

DESIGNED BY  
TONY VAN LIEW

PUBLISHED BY  
ICE

PRICE 5.95 each

\*\*\*

These books are supplements for the *SpaceMaster* role-playing and *StarStrike* spaceship battle games. Why they are called *Vessel Compendiums* is beyond me, as only half of each book is devoted to ship designs. Each gives six pages over to an explanation of the *SpaceMaster* universe, apparently in the fond belief that you will be buying supplements without first getting the basic

rules set. Each has some additional rules for ship construction, including hidden cargo holds, improved computers, and extra pods for mounting weapons, deflector screens, reactors and tachyon communicators.

### The ships

Slightly less than half of each book consists of ship designs, with notes about the history and availability of each ship. Most of the ships are illustrated, but only a couple have deck plans so their utility in role-playing games is limited.

*Pursuit Class* contains thirty-two small fast military vessel, ranging in size from a 300 ton Fighter up to an 8000 ton Cruiser. In the scenario section are an extra Blockade Runner and Free Trader, with the Free Trader the only ship to get deck plans.

*Adventurer Class* contains a wide variety of civilian craft (still armed to the teeth, though), from a 65 ton Shuttle to a 15 000 ton Yacht. There are Exploration Vessels, Freighters, Privateers and others. The only deck plans are for a Space Station.

### The scenarios

In *Adventurer Class* neither scenario has much to do with the ship designs. The first

is a basic shoot-'em-up on the previously mentioned Space Station. The second features annoyingly omnipotent natives, who could well have escaped from a *Star Trek* episode.

In *Pursuit Class* the ships do actually come into it. In one the player characters are drug smugglers, in the other (the most interesting of the lot) they play customs officers in a dispute with another customs force over a wanted criminal. The book ends with eleven short suggestions for ship combat scenarios.

Each book also has 65 counters for use in *StarStrike*. The counters are of general types (for example, SMAC Fighter, Large Freighter), rather than illustrating specific ships from the books. One set was a bit blurred.

For *SpaceMaster*, *Adventurer Class* is more useful with its ship designs, while *Pursuit Class* has better scenarios. For *StarStrike* both are equally useful, as they provide a wide range of ships for DIY scenarios.

Steve G Jones

## BRIARWOOD CASTLE

DESIGNED BY  
JEFF R LEASON & THOMAS  
COOK

PUBLISHED BY  
MAYFAIR GAMES

PRICE £8.45

\*\*

Originality was never a strong point of the original *City State of the Invincible Overlord*, and the tradition is continued in the latest offering for the new version of the source pack. *Briarwood Castle* provides that staple among roleplaying aids: castle plans and details of the inhabitants.

The pack contains two booklets and two brown on brown plans of the castle. The *Briarwood Castle* Guidebook contains

background information as well as details about dungeon levels: the depressingly titled *The Dungeon Book* contains the scenario and, well, more details about the dungeons.

Like those in the module's predecessors, the adventure is intended to introduce the characters to the background pack. The only encouraging thing about it, however, is that it will force the referee to improvise. Characters can adopt a flexible approach to the adventure, although the method by which this is achieved is predictable: a list of random encounters, something which will be monotonous except perhaps to the most addicted players of *Dungeons & Dragons*. Whatever happened to particularly cunning plans?

From here it is all downhill as far as great role-playing goes. Essentially the castle presents a multi-storey dungeon which the characters can wade through. The intriguing condition is that characters may not kill: how they will achieve this is perhaps the greatest mystery in the adventure.

The adventure has been designed for the evil-aligned characters provided, all of whom start as prisoners in the cells of *Briarwood Castle*. Their mission is to test the castle's security by subtly infiltrating it from outside. It's a flimsy excuse for a scenario, but given the dungeonesque description of the castle and its contents is probably the best that can be expected.

*Briarwood Castle* will probably be used once in a campaign and then forgotten. The pregenerated characters are not likely to become future characters for the players simply because their life expectancy is limited by the outcome of the scenario. But for referees who are in need of a castle to fill out a bit of their campaign world it will at least save the time it takes to design their own castle.

Ian Marsh



## CITIES FEATURE

# Tales of the City

*We take a look at some of the city products available, and ask how useful they are to the referee who wants to run a city campaign.*

## CITYBOOKS

**Book I: Butcher, Baker, Candlestick Maker**

**Book II: Port o' Call**

**Book III: Deadly Nightside**

*Generic supplements, published by Blade/Flying Buffalo/Task Force Games.*

This series of books takes a different approach to any other 'city supplement' I have seen. Instead of detailing a specific city, they contain a number of establishments or organisations, which can be inserted into any city as needed. Each was written by a different author, which explains why each entry has a slightly different slant on its subject, and why they never become stale or repetitious.

Everything is given in generic terms, so the books are not tied to any particular game system. The character statistics are presented in a basic form: Fighting Progress and Magic Ability are rated from poor to excellent. Magic Ability is further divided into eight types: Combat, Curative, Clairvoyant, Conveyance, Communication, Concealment and Conjururation.

Certain other standard assumptions are explained at the beginning. Locks also have a rating from poor to excellent. The currency is based on copper, silver and gold pieces, with 1 GP to 1 US dollar. Each building has a square gridded map,

usually at a scale of one square to one foot. The symbols on the maps are designed for easy recognition, so, for instance, the symbol for a bed looks like a modern bed, even if the description in the text is 'a pile of rags.'

Book I covers the widest range of the three. It ranges from inns to undertakers, but mostly contains shops that adventurers might find of interest, such as armourers and doctors. As advertised it does even have a candlestick maker, who can produce some useful magical candles. It won the H G Wells Award for Best Role-playing Adventure of 1982 (if that is any recommendation).

Book II deals with the businesses found in a seaport, so obviously it is not necessary if your city isn't by the sea. This is perhaps fortunate, as it is the hardest of the three books to get hold of. It includes a customs house, a lighthouse, a temple to a sea deity and a smuggling gang. Three of the 'establishments' are ships.

Book III concentrates on the dirty side of town, where even the muggers will not go without a bodyguard. It is not all bad, as adventurers can learn to fight at the Bloodmoon School and experience the justice of Nightside Inferior Court, before tangling with the real menaces like The Steel man assassins and the Yellow Poppy drug den.

The general flavour of the setting is 'standard fantasy', with elves, dwarfs, orcs and (spit) hobbits, and a few Viking and Arabian Nights intrusions. The lighthouse keepers are Japanese, although they are specified as being immigrants. The blandness of the setting makes it easy to slip into any existing campaign, while most of the characters and scenario ideas are original in spite of this. The books each have 'links' between the sections: for example, a gang may have its headquarters in one building, pilfer from another, and fence their ill-gotten gains at a third, but these are presented so that they can easily be changed.

An example from the first book is five pages on 'Professor Fyber's Taxidermy and Museum', for the adventurer who wants a permanent trophy of that dead manticore. The museum is described completely, with plans of its three floors. The Professor and his two assistants are portrayed with emphasis on their characters and motivation. Lastly, three short scenarios involving the museum are given. As for Fyber's Dark Secret, he is a taxidermist after all, and you know what they are like in all the best horror films...

Overall, these books provide a wealth of places to visit, people to meet, and ideas for scenarios. If there is any criticism, it is that each and every organisation has a Dark Secret. If the players find that every time they try to buy a loaf of bread the bakers are summoning the Elder Gods in the basement, the game could be getting out of hand. I would suggest downplaying this aspect for most of the places the adventurers visit, so it remains a rare surprise when it does happen.

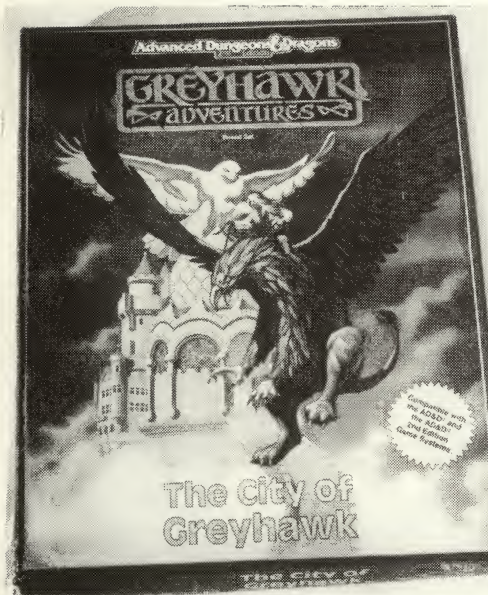
*Steve G Jones*

## LANKHMAR: City of Adventure

*AD&D supplement published by TSR.*

Based on Fritz Leiber's eponymous city of Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser and designed with AD&D in mind, *Lankhmar* is a carefully compiled description of a metropolis with its roots firmly in traditional fantasy. The design of the city is well executed if a little blocky and monotonous, and the map contains a reasonable layout coupled with areas for the referee to insert their own ideas and creations.





## CITY OF GREYHAWK

*For AD&D 2nd Edition, published by TSR.*

This is one of those products that's hard to fault, simply because it is so thorough. There are four large maps: an area map, a street plan, and under-world/sewers map and a beautiful pictorial map of the city that makes a perfect players' map. City details are given in two 96-page books. Gem of the Flanaess is a gazetteer introducing the city and describing the main areas, with some specific location descriptions. Folk, Feuds and Factions takes a broader look at the city, describing economics, prominent

people and the power groups to which they belong. It rounds off with a short sequence of adventures. Filling out the box is a set of adventures presented on one piece of card, printed with colour on both sides. These are an excellent idea, providing enough material to guarantee that players will always have something they can do in the city.

For players of straight, by-the-book AD&D, the *City of Greyhawk* is an excellent product. It captures the AD&D blend perfectly and is presented in the kind of depth normally lavished on the D&D Gazetteer series. However, this in itself limits its usefulness for any but dedicated AD&Ders. The way in which houses from wildly different cultures are thrown together on the pictorial map provides an all-too-shocking visual demonstration of how the game flings all and sundry into the melting pot without any regard for atmosphere. The detail can get a little tedious and pedantic, too, given that this is silly fantasy city we're talking about here, not a piece of subcreation.

No campaign that makes any pretence at being set in a well realised world could accommodate Greyhawk, except perhaps as the nightmare of some well-educated scholar. The adventures provide a few sparks of inspiration, but are mostly reliant either on some obscure monster (Grung, Dorshak and Scrags, for example) or on a ripped-off idea (such as the Goat as an election candidate, from Dave Sim's excellent comic *Cerebus*).

*Paul Mason*

## CITY-STATE OF THE IMPERIAL OVERLORD

*AD&D compatible, but based on its own system. Published by Mayfair Games.*

The original *City-State of the Imperial Overlord* is perversely something of a classic in the history of *Dungeons and Dragons*. Judges Guild had something of a reputation for budget, exiguous modules; *City-State* was all this applied to a fantasy city.

The original was highly derivative. It didn't require a close look to see its roots which, being a hotchpotch of familiar and popular fantasy, were suited to the style of play at the time. Role-players, however, have become more advanced since then, and the charming simplicity of the original *City-State of the Invincible Overlord* is no longer stimulating enough for rewarding games play.

This isn't to say that the original was good, just that it was typical of the products of the time. It fulfilled a need and with its supplements provided a bunch of useful maps which could be adapted to a referee's own world. It isn't surprising that it has been revised: *City-State* certainly needed to be if it were to stand a chance of competing with some of today's gaming products.

Mayfair Games' version of *City-State* offers very little that is new, but without having the same character as the original. The mongrel fantasy element has been replaced with a less complex crossbreed. It suffers from the same problem that afflicted its predecessor, one which is vital to solve if the encounters are to be different from simple fights: it lacks detail. What *City-State* provides is statistics for *Dungeons and Dragons* in some volume. Yet it does not provide the information that is vital to role-playing: its characters are merely statistics and do not have personalities or much in the way of motivation. In essence, *City-State* does not ask the vital question: why?

Referees who run city adventures can't expect to get away with what are effectively small dungeon encounters: the single hydra, kirin, chimera or whatever that for some reason just pops up in a back alley either to attack the characters, act the dying swan or play out the Androcles and the lion story. Characters in a city need adventures that embroil them in the running of that city, at whatever level they

City areas and specific locations are well detailed, as are prominent characters and also the land around the city: a nice touch. More important, space is given to a description of the factions warring for control of the city and their inter-relationships. There are also synopses of the Lankhmar novels, new monsters, new gods, a book for the referee's notes (an excellent idea) and some scenario ideas. This last area is where *Lankhmar* falls down: the ideas are pitifully short and the two scenario packs that followed simply didn't come up to scratch.

All the same, this is an excellent basic package with a good overall feel, enjoyable for Leiber fans and non-fans alike.

*James Wallis*

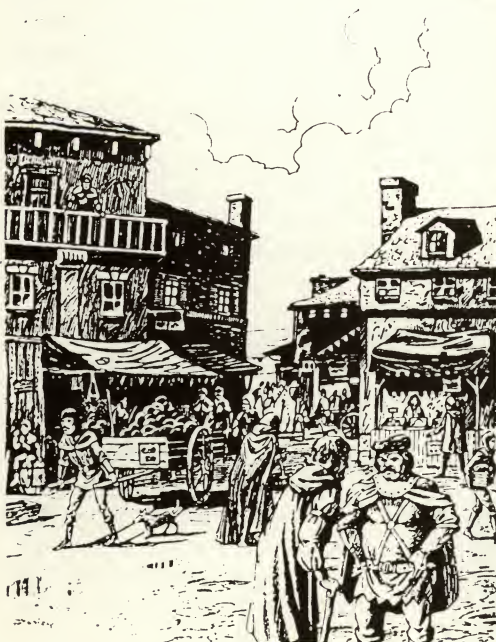


Illustration from TSR's *Lankhmar*



are suited to be at. This is where **City-State**'s detailing could be improved.

**City-State** is presumably going to be the main city in the fantasy world in which characters adventure and to ask for such detail, or at least some helpful indexing to find the leaders of certain types of organisation, isn't too much to expect. Outlines of adventures aren't necessary, because such detail is sufficient to spark off ideas. And such information would help a referee easily respond to the demands of players. What is missing from **City-State** is a clear list of important characters, not necessarily in the ruling classes, but the colourful characters of the streets and inns that player characters are most likely to meet. References to such characters are embedded in the bulk of the text, but really should be given some prominence for the referee to make the most of them. It is a pity that those characters who are described are severely lacking in personalities.

The information that the referee is provided with isn't helpful and will require some tinkering to make the characters fit in with his own world, if he has one, or will just seem odd in terms of the **City-State** campaign. Rather than select one mythos or creating one for the campaign, non-player characters worship gods from the entire range outlined in **Legends & Lore**. Listed are characters who worship the gods of the ancient Egyptians, the Japanese and central American Indians among others, which means a referee will have to do quite a bit of research to tailor these to his own needs.

Details of life beyond the city aren't covered in the main pack itself, but there is already a fast-growing range of supplementary modules to provide this information. Anyone who intends to use **City-State** will probably find that **Briarwood Castle** (reviewed this issue) is indispensable: it contains information which is important to the running of the **City-State**.

*Ian Marsh*

## HAVEN

*Thieves' Guild city supplement published by Gamelords.*

The Free City of Haven and its sequel **Secrets of the Labyrinth** suffers from what I call the **Bifrost syndrome** – namely the stupidity of putting out an incomplete product in the hope that sales

of the first few (mainly unusable) parts will enable the publishers to produce the rest. Haven is still usable, but potential purchasers should be aware that the third part, which completes the detailed city plans, never came out. There is a map of the whole city, which sufficed when I used the place in one of my old campaigns. Taken straight, Haven is cut from the same cloth as the Judge's Guild **City-State**, but has had somewhat more logic and depth lavished on it. The wacky fantasy required for such things as Centaur trolleybus services, and a pair of Hobbits called Bing and Bob who have a habit of heading off up the road somewhere, still fills the thing, but at the same time characters tend to be described in some detail, and most of the plots in the frequent scenario suggestions revolve around something other than dungeon adventures. Some of these are quite convoluted, and are good examples of the kind of political intrigues that can embroil the players within a fully developed city.

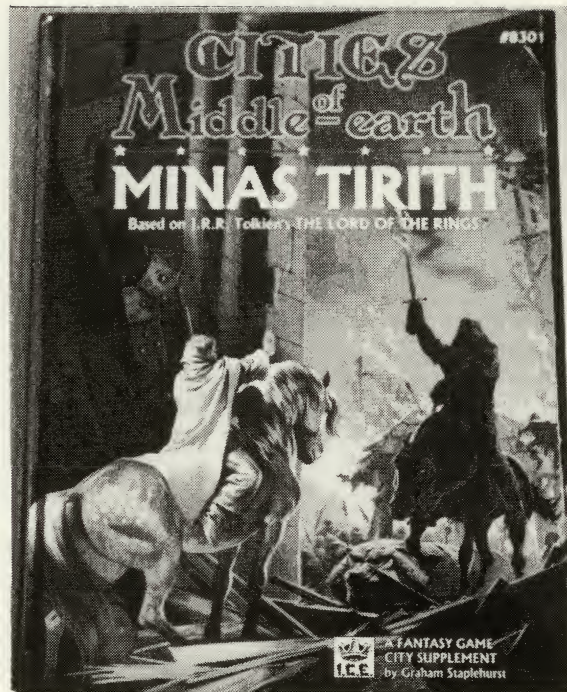
On balance, though, the poor production values and inconsistent format (volume 1 was three-hole punched in separate sheets, volume 2 was a booklet) make this one to pick up if you find it going cheap, but not one to hunt out.

*Paul Mason*

## MINAS TIRITH

*MERP hardback published by ICE.*

Being one of ICE's **Middle-earth Role Playing** game supplements, **Minas Tirith** contains more than just details of the city – it also covers the region nearby, including the Pellenor fields and the port of Harlond (Osgiliath is covered elsewhere). At first glance it might appear that **Minas Tirith** is going to be useful only for **MERP** referees, but because of the way ICE have gone about interpreting Tolkien's legacy, this isn't the case. Much of this book is of a slightly fanciful bent, making it far closer to traditional fantasy role-playing supplements (for example, a Sage by the name of Myall built a 'Vi-



trine' – a house made of glass including a large glass chute used to get up to his quarters. This marvel was inexplicably undiscovered by Peregrine Took in *Lord of the Rings*). However, being a **MERP** supplement, the place is dealt with in some depth. The organisation of the city is fully described, along with the principal characters at the usual period in Middle-earth's history. The most notable buildings are given extensive descriptions with floor plans, and their inhabitants are written up with obvious relish on the author's part. One might even suggest that there is *too much* detail in the pack, and wading through it could drive a busy referee to distraction.

Just to emphasise the way **Minas Tirith** fits into the traditional fantasy market rather than being limited to Middle-earth, the architecture illustrated is what you might call eclectic. Retouched photographs of real architectural features are mixed with artists' renditions of the usual fantasy buildings, to produce a blend more at home in the **City State of the Invincible Overlord** than old JRR's rather staid creation.

However, a colourful map, and the level of detail makes **Minas Tirith** a good choice for insertion into a fantasy campaign. Because it is based on such a famous setting it has a coherence and atmosphere lacking from many city products. Of course, the problem is that your players will recognise where it really is within a few minutes of you springing it on them . . .

*Paul Mason*



# RUNEQUEST CITIES

*RuneQuest 3 supplement published by Avalon Hill.*

This is based on the old non-RuneQuest cities material published by the Midkemia press, and it shows. It consists almost entirely of random encounter tables including all the diverse character types that one would expect to find in a traditional fantasy city, and also the kind of scene player characters observe (fire, public execution, drunks fighting), or the bizarre things which might befall them (chamber pot emptied onto character, finding an item, losing an item).

More tables enable the referee to create and populate villages, towns and cities in a fair amount of detail, and fill in player character 'downtime' in between sessions – a dubious idea since gamed time usually represents all the interesting events in a player character's life. One of the results from the tables can be a little extreme, and players might justifiably complain that they should have been 'in control' of their character during the events.

If you have only planned a small amount of detail for a city in your world, and you require some random tables to stimulate

your ideas in play, then this book might provide you with some assistance. However, books of random encounter tables are just books of random encounter tables – don't expect imaginative genius.

*John Scott & Paul Mason*

## THIEVES' WORLD

*Licensed city pack published by Chaosium.*

**Thieves' World** is an adventure pack describing the city of Sanctuary from the series of *Thieves' World* books edited by Robert Asprin, and unfortunately needs a good knowledge of those books to bring it alive. Although highly praised when it was released, this boxed set is beginning to look a little ragged.

Sanctuary is a small coastal city in a period of transition as a new governor attempts to impose his rule on it. Good attention is paid to the fantasy background, but neither the areas of the town nor the more notable citizens are fully fleshed-out. Clever encounter charts give a good atmosphere for a bustling port, but too much time is spent listing stats for char-



*Illustration from Chaosium's Thieves' World*

acters and monsters for every rolegame system imaginable (even **Traveller!**) If you know the books or are prepared to put work into it then **Thieves' World** is still worth a look, but it is showing its age.

*James Wallis*

# ROLE • CALL

**Paul Mason**

With a little bit of discipline, I've decided, a minor miracle will occur in this issue of GI. No, it's not getting the headings right on every page of GI (though that remarkable feat, too, should have been achieved). For once, I'm not going to rant about the extent to which commercial rolegames encourage a view of the referee as sole determinant of the plot of a game. Instead I'm going to join in with the waving of flags and slapping of *ledershosen* and mention my visit to Essen. Yes, even for a rolegamer this mammoth fair was worth a visit, though I must confess I didn't get involved in any rolegames (my German was just about up to asking someone if they would fill my hot water bottle, or direct me to the railway station). I was tempted to persuade the guy who ran a **Paranoia** game that

having a player who didn't speak the same language as most of the other players would add an additional tinge of, er, paranoia to the proceedings. Unfortunately I got distracted at the crucial moment (something to do with buying a copy of **Suppenkasper** for 8 marks) and missed out.

There were certainly a staggering array of rolegaming products at the show. Every English-language rolegame was there, including some stuff that I hadn't yet seen in this country (2nd Edition **Ars Magica**) and even my frequently plugged favourites, the **Tékumel Sourcebooks**. The indigenous product was also copious, and while it did appear to concentrate on the **Warhammer** big book/fantasy approach, there was plenty of quality in evidence.

During the fair I managed to get an interview with Ulrich Kiesow and Werner Fuchs, designers of the best selling German game **Das Schwarze Auge** (The Black Eye), and whom I might facetiously dub the Ian Livingstone and Steve Jackson of the German rolegaming hobby. Just as soon as I can assemble

some more information on the rolegames of continental Europe, I'll print the interview.

## IT'S THE FAN THING

Back in the early days of GI, we ran a series of features on fanzines in which John Harrington took a general look at the postal games zines around. We were planning to cover rolegaming fanzines, but found that the hobby was just too fragmented. For a while rolegaming zine fandom had become almost as organised as the longer-established **Diplomacy** fandom, with regular hobby meets, central listings of zines and so on.

Despite the sterling efforts of Wayne of **GM** magazine (which carried fanzine reviews in its early issues) in organising the regular **GM Meet**, there's no doubt that fandom ain't what it was. Or maybe I just lost touch when my own zine went into an overlong hibernation because of my work on GI? Either way, I want to do my bit, so any rolegaming fanzine editors reading this should get in touch, and we'll see about a few mentions in upcoming issues.

GI



## REVIEWS

## COMPUTER | GAMES

## SIM CITY

DESIGNED BY  
WILL WRIGHT & ROBERT  
STROBEL

PUBLISHED BY  
MAXIS/INFOGRAAMES

PRICE £29.95

Game Play: \*\*\*\*\*

Graphics: \*\*\*\*

Available for Amiga, IBM, Mac and ST.  
Reviewed on the Amiga.

Any game that has me, a hard to please cynic, playing it for four straight hours just has to be a winner. *Sim City*, an American game now being distributed in the UK by Infogrames, is easily the best game to appear on the Amiga for some while. Despite the dull sounding theme, it should be a required purchase for anyone who likes a good, fun game with plenty of strategy.

*Sim City* is about planning and building towns and cities. You, as mayor, have the choice where to build your factories, offices and bijou executive housing. You also set the local tax level to build and maintain the roads and railways and to finance large ventures such as bulldozing inner-city eyesores or commissioning an airport.

The down side is that you are also held personally responsible for unemployment, poor housing, heavy traffic, pollution, crime and quality of life which, although rather unfair, is all in a day's work for the Mayor of Dullsville. Your performance is constantly evaluated by opinion polls, complaints from the citizens and consequent population growth (or decline). To avoid such criticism, the good player will optimise steady growth with good planning. This latter, the heart of the game, is not at all easy.

All this is made possible by a rather clever graphics based system that lets you decide 'planning zones'. These are squares which are placed onto the map to determine future building development and they come in three main types: housing, offices and factories. These zones will comprise the bulk of the city and the knack is to balance them to generate growth. It is no good having factories right next to homes as pollution takes its toll and, conversely, if industry is too remote the little citizens won't commute. Lazy sods. The game is full of these neat little balancing acts and it takes a while to work them out. In addition to the basic zones, you can build parks, power stations, police and fire services and as the city grows in size, stadiums, ports and even an airport.

## GODZILLA

The game can be played in two ways. In the first case, you use one of the supplied scenarios which feature a ready built city with specific problems. These may be, as examples, heavy traffic in Bern, crime in Detroit or Godzilla in Tokyo. Your task is to solve the problem by redesigning the city (often through major urban renewal) and pressing on until you have reached your victory conditions. These situations can be pretty tough and are often fire-fighting exercises, literally in Hamburg's case. Good resource allocation is vital and it will be a patient and skilled player who sorts out the problems of each scenario.

The feel of some of the predesigned games can be a little negative and, for me, are not quite as exciting as the other option available. Here, the computer presents a virgin section of land and sea-front onto which you build your city from scratch. In this scenario, you set your own victory conditions and have a starting budget that is quickly spent on the various requirements of a growing metropolis. The interest here is that you get to see your own city grow gradually as immigrants arrive to take jobs and housing. Once tempted in, they complain about the inevitable taxes and lack of facilities and then promptly start to leave again. Your job is to keep them happy and

the city on course through periods of rapid growth or slow decline. It is soppy to say it, but one does get rather attached to the little 'Sims' who live in the town.

## URBAN MIGHT

The typical city will start with a few embryo sites, joined by roads and perhaps a rail link. As demand increases, the roads get busier and wider and more housing and jobs are required. This is achieved by 'zoning' new areas and linking them to the power and transport networks. This growth process continues until lack of space forces you to expand into island communities, satellite towns or to re-zone the inner cities. If you get it right, the town grows rapidly, properties rise in value and taxes flow in as you ride the boom. Get it wrong and you will find yourself bankrupt with minimal growth. Once at the bottom, your only ploy is to cut back on funding of transport and essential services. After a few months (the game is played over the course of many years) the roads and railways start to dis-integrate, houses turn into slums and, of course, crime increases. Obviously, the populace get stropky about all this and either leave town or complain about the then necessary high taxes. The Mayor is then in the classic urban vicious circle of high taxes and poor standard of living from which it is very hard to break away. For someone who has the misfortune to work in Lambeth, this all sounds very familiar.

That describes the 'basic' game that is tough enough to win by itself; it can be set for easy, hard or difficult levels. However, if you really fancy your chances you can set the game to generate random disasters. These vary from fire and flood to earthquakes and the Godzilla option. The latter prompts a big green blob to waddle out the lake which then bites large chunks out of your carefully nurtured bayfront villas. As you might expect, this sort of thing does absolutely nothing for the neighbourhood.

Although rather silly, Godzilla is typical of the excellent graphics that *Sim City* uses to show the town in detail. They are not quite up to *Populous* standards, but



then unlike that much-hyped program, **Sim City** plays well as a game. The plan view houses and towers have a nice 3D feel, the roads have little cars driving along them and the railway chugs back and forth across the map. Once a port is in place, ships appear in the harbour and helicopters buzz around from the airport. To help the mayoral decisions, there are also overall maps and charts that graphically show such useful information as land value, crime, population growth rates and so on. This is all well done and the whole program runs quickly and easily using the mouse and drop-down menus.

## ANIMATED

Overall, **Sim City** must be ranked right up there in the all time Amiga classics. It is the first title that I have come across to turn a 'serious' theme into a passable simulation while also making for an ex-

cellent game. I am not suggesting for a moment that **Sim City** is an accurate simulation of town planning but it has enough elements to make decisions important and it is great fun to build the individual, animated cities. Probably because of this, **Sim City** has a strange attraction and each of my friends who played it, even the doubtful ones, keep coming back to improve those slums or re-route their rail network. It is also a game that you can play over and over again (a save option is provided) and still be left wanting more. For this reason, I hope that there will be an expansion kit to keep the system going; anything this good deserves the support. This is an excellent game which really shows what the 16-bit micros can do if their facilities are used to the full. One wonders what Maxis will come up with next.

*Mike Siggins*

## OMEGA

DESIGNED BY  
STUART B MARKS

PUBLISHED BY  
ORIGINS/MINDSCAPE

PRICE £24.99

Game Play: \*\*\*\*

Graphics: \*\*\*

*Available for Atari ST and IBM PC. Reviewed on the ST.*

**Omega** is a 'game' set in the distant future where man no longer fights against man, but produces cybertanks (thinking tanks) to do all the work for him. Your job, as a qualified, but inexperienced, cybernetics engineer, is to design a cybertank to go into combat with the 'opposition', whoever they are. Before you are trusted with this worthwhile task, you must prove to the Project Directors that your design is worth putting into production. To do this you must put it through an authorisation procedure which ends up with your design being tested in combat against other similar tanks.

The basic meat of the game comes with the design of the tank itself. At the start you are given a budget with which you must pay for certain features such as class of tank, number of fuel cells, drives system, weapon type, scanner and if, your

budget permits, a number of special items such as repair kits, launchers and shields. You must then program the cybertank's brain or AI (artificial intelligence) as they call it. This is where the heart of the game lies, and presumably the enjoyment. The designers have come up with something called CCL, or Cybertank Command Language. This is a simple computer language similar to Logo or Basic, through which you can program the AI to perform a number of routines. It is the skill with which you manipulate this language that determines how well your tank will perform.

## TANKED UP

When you have programmed the AI it is tested to see if you have put any glitches in it, and if it passes you can put it through a combat simulation. You can then make improvements on your AI depending on how it performs. You may then put it into battle and should you achieve a 70% success rate over a number of battles your authorisation level will change and therefore your budget for designing the cybertank. This means you will be able to afford some of the nice extras, but also means you will have to alter the program to make use of them.

The combat is quite well represented graphically as a bird's eye view of the battlefield, with a number of monitors to indicate damage levels and the like. The combat does tend to be slow, and can be done away with – the computer informing you of the results of a battle. This is a little pointless as you need to see the tank perform to know how to iron out any

## CHARTS

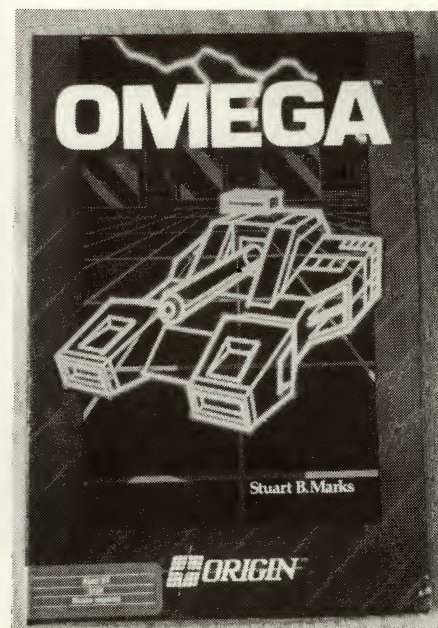
### Computer Games

- ① Red Lightning (SSI)
- ② Storm Across Europe (SSI)
- ③ Rommel (SSG)
- ④ Starfleet 2 (Interstel: import)
- ⑤ Pirates (Microprose)
- ⑥ Sword of Aragon (SSI)
- ⑦ Curse of the Azure Bonds (SSI/TSR)
- ⑧ Waterloo (PSS/Mirrorsoft)
- ⑨ Fire Brigade (Panther/Mindscape)
- ⑩ Sword of Twilight (Electronic Arts)

*Chart supplied by Strategic Plus Software, PO Box 8, Hampton, Middx TW12 3XA.*

weaknesses. You can alter the battles to a certain degree by deciding on the opponents you face, numbers of them, and where they appear on the battlefield, but other than this the tanks just trundle along following your programming until they destroy all the opposition or are themselves destroyed.

Other options include customising the battlefield to your own design, two player





and team play. The latter two are the most enjoyable, but do require a much higher degree of programming skill to achieve satisfactory results.

When you first look at this package it is easy to become overwhelmed. The box is heavy, and upon opening it you can soon see why. The first manual you take out is fairly thin and is titled New Personnel Orientation Guide. This is followed by the Reference Guide. Then you find what appears to be a book, and you think 'How thoughtful of the publishers to provide some background reading to help get the feel of the game – similar to the little booklet in *Elite*, only larger.' You then read the title: *Cybertank Engineer's Handbook*, and realise with horror that the small booklets are just quick reference manuals and that you will have to read this meaty tome to appreciate game fully.

This, however, is not that daunting, despite its 247 pages. The style is fairly chatty and user friendly. It does tend to

use abbreviations which you need to refer to at first but you soon get in the flow. All in all the production is very professional and you do feel that you are getting value for money.

### CEREBRAL MASS

In summary I would say that *Omega* is a unique game that has had a considerable amount of thought lavished on it. It is not a game for the shoot-em-up enthusiast, as you must put considerable thought in before you get anywhere. This may well be its failing as it is ultimately a cerebral game, so will not appeal to the mass market. However, if you do want a game that requires a lot of thought that will be able to keep your interest for a long time then this is probably the game for you. If you can find someone else who is willing to take the time to learn, and gets the bug, then your entertainment will be assured for a long time.

*John Inglis*

## BIG BANG

PROGRAMMED BY  
OXFORD MOBIUS

PUBLISHED BY  
ZORTEK

PRICE £24.99

Game Play: \*\*\*

Graphics: \*\*\*

Available for IBM PC.

**Big Bang** claims to be the ultimate stock market simulation. I mention this in case there are any religious fundamentalists reading this who are preparing to send me death threats for reviewing a game based on the scientific theory of how the universe came into being.

As befits a game which claims to be 'the ultimate executive toy', this is a high quality package. It comes in a deep, regal looking royal blue box. Inside the box you will find a game diskette, a data diskette, a manual and two spongy bits of padding. The sponges are dual purpose: they prevent the diskettes from being bashed about in transit, and they are also very useful for mopping the sweat from the brow in the game's tense moments. The manual not only gives instructions on

how to load and play the game, it also has a lucid 'Introduction to the City' section so as to give novice yuppies a grounding in the terminology of the wacky world of finance. At the back of the book are profiles on the 100 companies quoted on the **Big Bang** stock exchange. Some of these names will be familiar. For instance we have Sparks and Mencer, Tie Rail, Leopard, Wipmey, Late and Tyle, Jambe Foods, Vaddington, Starchy & Starchy, and my own favourite: S R Tent (S R Gent – a clothing company which specialises in outside clothes). In order to do well at this game you will have to research these companies thoroughly, for it is important to be able to react quickly to events. Although the game does allow you to freeze the action while you look through the manual to do a search on those companies likely to benefit (for instance) from a collapse in the gold price, this tactic is strictly for wimps.

### CAPITAL CITY

Once you have completed your research and, perhaps, armed with a few helpful notes, you are ready to take your place in the glare of the computer screen. Just don your stripy shirt, red braces and paisley tie, apply some mousse to your hair, park your maroon glasses on the bridge of your nose and start trading. It's not as easy as you might think, particularly as your goal is to parlay your starting capital of £10 000 into a million quid. A somewhat less ambitious target is merely to avoid going broke.

The game action takes place on a single screen display, which consists of various windows and icons. The icons can be clicked on to reveal drop-down menus which either allow you to perform actions (buy or sell shares, borrow money) or to review the status of your shareholdings or bank balance. The windows can either be scrolled up or down, or 'toggled'. Thus a considerable amount of information is packed on to the one screen.

Along the top of the screen are three windows. Reading from left to right you have charts on commodities, exchange rates and stock market indices. Depending on the time scale you choose, these charts are updated on an hourly, daily or monthly basis (game time, not real time!). You can toggle between gold, oil and steel on the commodities chart; sterling, yen and dollars on the currencies chart; and the FT-SE 100 (UK), Dow Jones 30 (US) and Nikkei Dow (Japan) on the stock market indices chart. The fluctuations on these charts affect different companies in different ways. The Japanese companies, such as Casino Computer, become 'buys' when the Japanese stock market is buoyant and the yen is weak, while Extramar, for instance, becomes a 'sell' when the oil price slumps and the cost of oil rigs is high due to the strength of the steel price.

### MARKET SOURCES

While keeping an eye on the movements of markets, exchange rates and commodities and assessing how these will affect the prices of shares, you also have to assimilate all the news coming through on the teletype line at the bottom of the screen. This provides information on events of a general or specific nature. A general event might be a war in the Middle East leading to a shortage of oil ('Buy Spell Oil!'), while a specific event might be newspaper revelations about the love life of the managing director of Butron (the laws of libel discourage me from hazarding a guess at the company Butron is meant to represent). In reacting to general events your first task is to identify those companies whose share prices are likely to be affected by the news. Your second task, and this also applies to specific events, is to determine what effect the news will have on the share price. If you think the share price will go down, and you hold shares in that company, your course of action is clear: sell them shares. If you think the share price will go up, you might want to buy into the shares, but you may have to sell other shares in order to raise the cash to buy the new shares.

In the middle of the display screen is a window which displays bar charts on the



price performance of ten shares. This window may be scrolled up or down, so you can look at more shares. By clicking on a share and highlighting it you can click on another icon and get some background on the company: its recent trading record, share price performance and its business profile. This facility is useful for those traders who believe in 'trading on fundamentals' and ignoring the short term fluctuations engendered by current events. However, if you are seriously going to pursue the objective of earning a million you are going to have to indulge in a certain amount of ducking and diving into speculative stocks, always remembering that every time you deal in shares, you have to pay dealing costs.

### FLYING TONIGHT

The best strategy seems to be to safeguard against bankruptcy by investing some of your money in 'blue chip' stocks – companies which are solid as the Bank of England (no great recommendation, these days). The remainder of your cash should be for joyrides on high flying, speculative stocks. Bone up on all the companies on the market so you can be the first to react to news, and then use your judgement to get out before profit-taking sets in. Just to make things harder, the game steadily bleeds you of cash in the form of living expenses. The richer you become, the higher your standard of living, and so of course the more money is bled from your current account. For some of us, this is all too close to real life...

Clearly this game will not be to everyone's taste. The subject matter is a little dry, and it is not a game which instantly hooks you. If you are interested in the stock market, however, you will find that repeated play is rewarded by greater success. The rules manual is excellently written and the game mechanics are neat, given the limitations of a single screen. In some ways it is a pity that this much programming talent has been spent on a simulation which will only have limited appeal when there are so many mass market games which appear to have been developed and designed by Messrs Bodgit and Flogit. If I had to sum up **Big Bang** in just one sentence I would describe it as stimulating, educational but not addictive.

Now, where was that game on the creation of the universe? Ah, here it is. 'In the beginning, was the computer program...'

John Harrington

## OMNI-PLAY BASKETBALL

DESIGNED BY  
ED RINGLER

PUBLISHED BY  
SPORT-TIME

PRICE £24.95

Game Play: \*\*\*

Graphics: \*\*\*

Available for the Commodore Amiga

What we have here is a decent attempt at filling a gap in the computer sports game market. To my knowledge, apart from various one-on-one games, there has never been a really playable basketball game on 16-bit computers and it was about time that one appeared. **Omni-Play Basketball** has managed to be the first out of the gate but with the all-conquering Cinemaware currently working on a similar game, I suspect they will have a fairly short reign at the top.

### BASKET CASE

As this is an American product, distributed over here by the excellent Mindscape company, what we get are American rules and team names. Sadly, because of licence restrictions, **Omni-Play** is not permitted to use individual player names so there are no Larry Birds or Michael Jordans here. This is sad but does not detract from the game too much as fictional names are provided.

The game offers the usual selection of one-off games, league play and playoffs. You are free to play against the computer or against another player and control of the players is by joystick. The joystick is relevant because you can only really get the best from the game by playing the semi-arcade mode.

Although there are options to trade and the players have individual ratings, the game is rather boring as a computer v computer simulation, but then it probably wasn't intended to work that way.

Game play itself isn't too bad, but you really need to play against someone of equal ability. The computer makes mincemeat of the likes of me. The trouble is, nothing exciting happens. Some cynics would argue this makes it an accurate

simulation. Most of the features you would expect are present: dribbling, steals, fouls, rebounding and two and three point shots, but the only truly spectacular parts of the game are the slamdunk sequences, which feature various high flying antics on lone breakaways. I think the backboard gets smashed a little too often though. Funnily enough, a lot of dunks are missed by the human-controlled players whereas the computer is strangely flawless!

The games last about 10 minutes of real time each, which is about right for comfort ('Joystick Wrist' can soon set in), and this enables a few games to be played in a session. The only drawback is that rather than a typical basketball score of, say, 111-110 the games are in the 16-15 area. Not a major problem, but you stats fans can forget the game from the numbers angle.

Overall, the game has some pretty good graphics but they lack the professional standard of the Cinemaware games, which they seem to be trying to emulate. Although the actual game action is pretty good (you get a view from behind the basket, showing just one half of the court) the peripheral graphics screens are rather lacking in originality – a typical example is the really boring half time sequence that no one in their right mind would want to watch twice. Luckily, you can skip it. Otherwise, no real complaints but it was a pretty dumb move to occasionally allow the two teams to have very similar coloured shirts. Very thoughtful, that. It makes passing really interesting.

### PROTECTION RACKET

I have four big gripes. The first is that the players are too difficult to control easily (on pass direction especially) and events such as throw-ins, penalty descriptions and free throws take far too long. The poor control is surprising, but perhaps I haven't worked out the skills required.

Secondly, there are some problems with the program which cause some weird shapes to appear on screen and when the crowd scrolls back to show the scoreboard, the whole screen looks very odd.

The third problem is the protection scheme. The disk is unprotected but you get to suffer from one of these 'Enter the word at page 19, line 1...' systems. I have few problems with these usually, but **Omni-Play** have made the task much more onerous by getting you to count down twenty or thirty lines on the required page (instead of the usual one or two) and then type in the word exactly.



Frankly, this is annoying. Why not use the now widely-accepted system of a dark red keycode list (which can't be photocopied) to start the game?

Finally, I note from the literature that it is possible to buy add-on disks (at a tanner or more each) to cover NBA-type leagues, college play and a side-on graphics view. My only comment is that for a game costing £25 I fully expect these to be supplied as part of the basic game.

### SMART COMPETITION

With the similar Cinemaware version of the game in the works, it can only be a matter of time before Omni-Play is swept aside by better graphics, more control-

lable game play and bags of atmosphere. For now though, **Omni-Play Basketball** isn't at all bad. If you can get to grips with the player control and get good enough to beat the computer once in a while, it has a lot going for it. It represents a worthwhile purchase for those with a liking for the sport and some skill with arcade-type systems. Don't expect too many thrills though.

Mike Siggins

der, engaging in battle or even avoiding. Choosing battle takes you to the first of five arcade style sub-games in which your general gets a chance to direct his men tactically. The forces are shown lined against each other in true tabletop style. Once the whistle blows the rival armies hurtle towards each other and disappear into a messy scrum. A mouse pointer allows you to direct formations and control archers independently with enough accuracy to make successive battles interesting. Should the opposing general decide to retreat, you have the option of pursuing him on horseback. Slashing your way through enough of his cronies will give you the chance to decapitate the general and (understandably) end his involvement in the game.

## LORDS OF THE RISING SUN

DESIGNED BY  
PHYLLIS & ROBERT JACOB

PUBLISHED BY  
MIRRORSOFT

PRICE £24.99

Game Play: \*\*\*\*

Graphics: \*\*\*\*

*Available for the Amiga and ST (coming soon). Reviewed on the Amiga.*

Flushed with the success of their TV **Sports Football** and **Rocket Ranger**, Mirrorsoft have followed up with another guts and glory epic based in twelfth century Japan. A strategy game of this genre doesn't appear too obvious a progression. In a market where joysticks usually beat the less glamorous simulations into submission, it is good to see a team of their calibre tackling a new field, adding a flair and originality to a graphically barren area of gaming.

The plot is simple: as one of two competing brothers, you must restore honour to the house of Minamoto by capturing all the rival Taira clan's castles. The accompanying pages of tear-jerking background history set out the story behind the conflict, as well as subtly hinting at possible strategies.

There really is only one way a game like this can start. Sure enough, play was heralded with a suitably impressive gong,

followed by a moody title sequence. Before the action starts, you are given the choice of playing one of the late Yoshitomo's two sons. Yoritomo is the elder of the two: described as 'the consummate politician and strategist', he begins play in a strategically superior position to his more athletic younger brother, and has noticeably better leadership abilities. Yoshitsune makes up for his youth with greater skill on the battlefield – a better bet for those who enjoy the game's arcade style encounters.

### HARA KIRI

Once your character is selected, you are transported to your home castle where you are given the option to enter and hire ninja to assassinate tiresome opponents (avoid doing this until things look bleak, since the dishonour of a failed murder attempt results in your ritual suicide).

Leaving your castle takes you on to the main map screen, which scrolls to depict the whole of Japan, complete with roads, castles, monasteries, towns, ports and seasonal weather. This grand overview allows you to monitor the progress of enemy troops, issue movement instructions to your generals and seek out potential allies.

By positioning the mouse over the armies (represented by coloured banners) the player can zoom into an area of the map and gather information about any generals in the area. A message window at the bottom of the map constantly flashes news of encounters during the course of the game, resolving these confrontations automatically unless the player chooses to take command of the situation himself.

Encountering armies gives you the option of requesting alliance, demanding surren-

der. Other encounters place your forces outside the gates of enemy castles, giving you the heroic option of personally assaulting the main gate and hacking your way through hundreds of soldiers until its defences have been overcome: yet another arcade style game which takes time to master, but which works well against an added time element.

### CASTLE KEEP

The final mini-game takes place when the castle you currently occupy is besieged. Taking a position at a window, you shoot arrows at the marauding attackers as they clamber over the walls and join the main fight in the courtyard below. In practice, this is much harder than it sounds, requiring far more skill and timing than I had to offer.

Each of these sub games provide interesting asides to the main strategic game, which takes repeated campaigns to appreciate fully, though it doesn't have the opportunities for skilful strategy that it might. As expected in a game of this detail, troops can be resupplied and general skills and ratings improved and exchanged. Subplots involve searching for missing relics, and group play is both rewarding and entertaining.

Mirrorsoft have updated the best elements from a previous release **Defender of the Crown**, and combined it with arcade action which adds to rather than subtracts from the realism. The only criticism is that more time has been lavished on the arcade elements than on the basic strategic wargame. **Lords of the Rising Sun** has set a standard that others will find hard to folly. And follow they will.

Ernesto Williams



## JAMES CLAVELL'S SHOGUN

ADAPTED BY  
DAVE LEBLING

PUBLISHED BY  
INFOCOM

PRICE £24.99

Game Play: \*

Graphics: \*\*\*

Available for the IBM PC.

Note that word 'adapted': this is basically just the novel translated into a computer text adventure. Actually not *quite* a pure

text adventure – there are some pictures, which generally pop up to show you when you're on the right track, and these are in quite a pleasing 18th century Japanese style. They are the best thing about the whole package, in fact.

The adventure is divided into scenes which will be familiar to everyone who has read the book: Blackthorne's arrival in Japan, Yabu's rescue of Rodrigues, and so on. Each scene must be completed before progressing to the next, and there is very little latitude. You might get a higher or lower score in a scene, but if you bugger it up completely then you are just not allowed to continue. If you recently read the novel (or saw the film) you are in for precious few surprises. I read it ten years ago and even so I found the adventure depressingly familiar, like struggling through a rather laborious recurring nightmare. In most scenes, the trick is not so much in figuring out the gist of what has to be done, but getting the exact words or correct timing for each com-

mand. A good adventure ought to be capable of being played from start to finish using a little common sense and forethought, not in continuous saves and replays.

The first section, set aboard the Erasmus, is the only one which approaches decent adventure game standards. I get the feeling (though I don't have the novel handy to refer to) that this is also the only scene original to the game. It gives the impression that Dave Lebling started out doing something reasonable, then realised that he was constrained to follow Clavell's plot virtually verbatim, and just threw in the creative towel. I would rather have seen this game taking the novel as a springboard for much more open adventure possibilities. As it stands, I can't see who could get anything out of it. Except Infocom and James Clavell, that is.

Dave Morris

## GO-MOKU & RENJU

PROGRAMMED BY  
BRAY RESEARCH

PUBLISHED BY  
ATARI MINDGAMES

PRICE £24.99

Game Play: \*\*\*

Graphics: \*\*

Available for the ST.

**Go-Moku** (five in a line), and **Renju** (a sophisticated version of this game which puts restrictions on the first player in order to neutralise first move advantage) are perhaps ideally suited for conversion to computer. If nothing else, the games only consist of black and white counters on a grid, so it doesn't matter whether you have a mono or colour monitor with your ST.

**Go-Moku** is a kiddies game in Japan, and not taken too seriously, since the first player can always force a win! Which leaves **Renju**, an altogether more serious prospect, which has professional players and a dan-grade system. The playing strength of the program seems OK, pro-

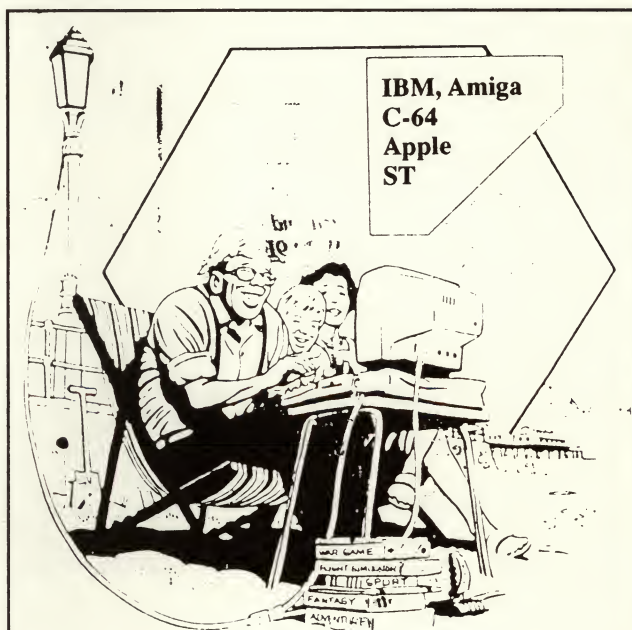
viding you have the time to wait for the machine to make its move.

The packaging looked enticing, and with Atari lending their name to this piece of software, I was hoping for quite a lot. My hopes were somewhat dashed, though, since I am an impatient gamer, and although there are supposedly nine levels to choose from, in practice the program only seems to have two modes – slow or stupid.

The other major flaw with my copy was that when I tried the 'show thinking' option, the thing tied up and went berserk. It should have been a nice feature, but just resulted in a growing frustration, aggravated even more by the repeated demonstration of the winning line after each game – fair enough if the sequence only lasted a few time – but it carries on until becoming irksome, and again, impossible to break out of.

So, if you have tremendous reserves of patience and are willing to put up with the glitches, it is worth a look.

Steve Nichols



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## STELLAR CRUSADE

DESIGNED BY  
NORMAN C KOGER JR &  
GRAEME BAYLESS

PUBLISHED BY  
SSI/US GOLD

PRICE £34.99

Game Play: \*\*\*\*

Graphics: \*\*\*

*Available for the ST, PC and Amiga. Reviewed on the ST.*

Let me make a small admission: I love resource management games. If the game happens to involve a spot of exploration and some warfare then that's even better. A science fiction setting and you're really talking my language!

*Stellar Crusade* is set at the beginning of the 24th century, in the partially-explored Kiffryn's Cats star cluster, when the People's Holy Republic were just starting to become concerned about the appearance of the Corporate League at the opposite corner of said 25-star cluster. Neither side knowing much about the neighbourhood, and just as important, neither having the resources to do much about the other's presence, both promptly set about expanding from their original two or three planets. Inevitably, sooner or later, one or the other was going to start something, possibly starting with a few 'pirate' raids on the other's commercial transport, ultimately leading, of course, to all-out war.

### STELLAR CONQUEST

This is a game of several phases, some of which may be omitted or scaled down depending on the scenario you choose to play. These phases overlap to a greater or lesser degree, but are, in order: Exploration & Colonisation, Economic Expansion, Limited Warfare and Full Warfare.

Exploration is achieved by sending out exploration teams (what else?) to promising-looking systems. Once landed, you become aware of such useful attributes as habitability and raw material availability. Once you have identified the systems you are interested in, you can start to colonise

them (although you will seldom have the wherewithal to usefully develop more than one at a time – colonies are expensive to assemble).

As you're trying to expand your frontiers, you're also working hard on building up your domestic economy. Each turn (a turn represents three months) the output from your factories is allocated towards any or all of the following: new farms, mines and refineries (to develop those natural resources), new factories and, most importantly new or expanded production facilities (shipyards, for example). Anything left over can then be fed into those shipyards (or military training facilities) for the production of whatever they are currently assigned to produce. Careful planning is required here. In order to produce more ships/armies later, you need to build up the means of production. At the same time, you have to keep up a steady output in order to avoid getting caught with your pants down (bear in mind that the opposition always seems to produce more of everything than you do!). Any output not used is put towards R&D, eventually gaining an increase in ship effectiveness (very handy).

It's no good just producing warships – without freighters you won't be able to move goods, people and (in the full-feature game) spare parts to the places where they're needed. But since sooner or later, the enemy is going to start something (unless you start it first), you will also need to be producing something with teeth.

Once open war is declared, combat will occur whenever forces from both sides are present in the same system. Long-range weapons (missiles) will be fired first, their effectiveness being determined by the equipment present on the respective ships. Once all the missiles have been fired, the fleets close and set to with their short range stuff (lasers). Combat normally takes several rounds to resolve, either side having the option to withdraw, which usually (not always) succeeds. If you win a battle in a system which contains an enemy-occupied planet, you may attempt to invade the planet using your assault troops (if you brought any and they survived the space battle, that is). Winning that battle gives you control of that planet and its economy, although, since the people are basically loyal to the enemy, you will have to keep a close eye on them until your propagandists have been to work.

And that's it. Scenarios include war only, exploration only, a couple of 'quick-start' options (where planets are already developed and war is imminent), plus two

full-scale settings, the longer (and best of all) being over 100 turns.

As you should have already gathered, this is a large game. There is a wealth of detail which, for a pleasant change, enhances enjoyment in the main. Such goodies are available as designing your own ships (recommended once you understand what's going on), using individual fleet commanders and intelligence operations.

### SPACE HULK

Criticisms? One big one, I'm afraid. From a user-friendliness viewpoint, the game gets a black mark. The whole thing is mouse-driven, which initially works fine, but there are no keyboard alternatives, not even for commonly-used menu options, which becomes more and more of a pain as you become familiar with the game's mechanics. I have to say that this is, quite simply, bad design. Also, you may have to go through a number of screens (navigating by carefully-positioned mouse clicks) to achieve a simple objective like loading a freighter. Again, bad design. To allocate factory output, you have to select the option required and hold down the mouse button until the number required has been counted to. Go one over and you must abort the work done so far and start again. Infuriating. The simple alternative of also allowing keyboard input of numbers has been ignored. The game is attractively presented, the various screens being well-laid out and the map being relatively easy to understand. Each turn takes between 5 and 15 minutes, so expect to use the save facility when playing the long game unless you have incredible stamina. Packaging is pretty usual – a box, two disks (main program and scenario set-ups) and a well written 35-page manual which should be read before starting. No disk-swapping is required once under way, thank goodness.

If you remember the first paragraph of this review then you'll obviously have realised that this is a game that almost couldn't fail with me. I'm glad to report that it didn't. It loses the final 'Game Play' star mainly because of the irritating user interface and, ultimately, its sameness with repeated play (although I should point out that I have played many times). The price is inflated though. At a sensible price (and you should be able to get at least a tenner off by shopping around the mail-order ads) it's a must for anyone who shares my tastes.

Mike Woodhouse



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## LETTERS

**The price is right**

Reading the editorial of October's issue of 'rival' magazine *Games Review Monthly*, comment was made about your increase in price to £1.95 as an act of desperation. In my opinion, this is obviously more expensive than other magazines but I will continue to buy *Games International* for as long as you keep up the good work, whatever the cost. I find all your games reviews to be extremely accurate and as a result am now an avid player of Schoko & Co, Topple and Hol's der Geier.

I'm sure I speak for the rest of the more discerning gaming public.

**Neil Wilson**

Horfield, Bristol BS7 8SD

*The real 'act of desperation' was GRiM's scurrilous attack. Many thanks for your kind comments and encouragement.*

**Better late than never**

Page 47, GI #9: a silly role-playing game called *It Came From The Late, Late, Late Show* by Stellar Games. Do you have the address of this game company? Please, please, please! How about always mentioning the addresses of the game companies mentioned in your mag?

**Stein Surland**

Drammen, Norway.

*The report to which you refer was filed by our roving mad correspondent, James Wallis, who was last spotted in New Zealand. However, we have tracked down Stellar Games, and they can be contacted at PO Box 156, Swanton, OH43558 USA.*

*To list names and addresses of all games companies mentioned would simply use up valuable advertising space.*

**Wonderful world**

It's amazing, and unfortunate, but I haven't been able to find a domestic magazine which covers *all* types of games. The American magazines I've come across are either highly specialised and/or tied to a particular company.

I've purchased several games based on your reviews and have yet to be disappointed. Your rating system has proved reliable. One thing I'd like to see included in your magazine are reviews of good games which have been out for a while.

## REBOUND

**The Editor responds . . .**

Your reviews focus on recent releases and this is appropriate. However, being somewhat new to the wonderful world of games, there are probably a lot of games out there which I don't know about.

Keep up the fine work.

**Frank E Baca**

Pittsburgh, California, USA.

*Hope our consumer guide in the last issue proved a help.*

**Robo cop**

I thought I should reply to Mark Pawelek's letter in issue 9.

In his letter, Mr Pawelek comes down rather heavily on the work of Kevin

Siembieda, in my opinion one of the better games designers at work today. True, the Palladium system is a D&D derivative and hardly has a claim to be the 'state of the art' but Siembieda puts a lot of work into the products he sells and this can be seen by the sheer amount of information in the typical Palladium game. Compare *The Palladium RPG* with AD&D and see which comes out top in terms of value for money. *Robotech*, incidentally, is based on a rather good Japanese series and not on *Battletech* as Mr Pawelek states. Indeed, the *Battletech* game is a direct *Robotech* rip-off, right down to the design of the original mechs.

I have to say that Palladium products are some of the best I have played. Not the most technically innovative, nor the best

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written, but simply some of the most 'fun'. Their fantasy rolegame, in particular, is probably one of the top three traditional rolegames on the market (just behind *Chivalry & Sorcery* and *Tunnels & Trolls* – call me a traditionalist. Incidentally, bravo to John Harrington for his continued support of T&T). Palladium games have a history of being hammered in the press, as those who remember a certain inaccurate review in *Space Gamer* a few years ago will agree.

**Jon Hancock**

Stanley, Staffordshire ST9 9LX.

### The professional view

Your report of the Glasgow Sensationcon event, published in your September/October issue, was not only inaccurate, it was dishonest and spiteful. In attending that event I not only promoted my scheduled demonstration of *Save The President!* at Glasgow's Virgin Games store in Argyle Street; I also did my best to promote the event itself as my press release indicated: '... will participate in Sensationcon, Glasgow's unique board games convention (time and place given).'

Ellis Simpson, the event's organiser, has confirmed this and at the time of the event he wryly remarked: 'Any chance of the (*Scotsman*) reporter writing about Sensationcon disappeared when Brian Walker started to harangue her.' The reporter referred to, Joan McAlpine, found you 'totally objectionable' – no doubt that's why you also slagged *her* off, a trained journalist doing a professional job – in

complete contrast to *your* reportage. (Any cub reporter will confirm that a professional journalist always checks his facts; you didn't check with me or Ellis Simpson.)

But wait: you quoted from my press release – '[Jack Jaffé] ... is the UK's leading authority on board games' – so you *must* have seen it and ignored my efforts my efforts to promote Sensationcon, in favour of your own dishonest and spiteful presentation. The validity of the above claim is based on nearly 20 years in the games business – as inventor, manufacturer, broadcaster, consultant but above all, on giving assistance to SIGMA members and other inventors *and* playing and playtesting games at the SIGMA Games Club over the last 15 years; it's at least as valid as your claim to be an *international* publication – you don't even have *national* UK distribution and you have not, as yet, published any certifiable readership data.

All of which is secondary to the basic fact: you refuse to publish any reference to *Save The President!* – a unique, original 100% UK product which has been favourably received and reviewed in the USA, Germany, Holland, Belgium, Japan – even in the UK, a country not noted for its response to strategy games – purely because of your personal animus. You're an *amateur* and, sadly, that doesn't offer much of a future for your organ, whose size and penetration are clearly in indirect proportion to your ego.

You continue to promote the German product, *Die Macher*: Ellis Simpson's

comment on the game was: 'It stinks!'; his comment on *Save The President!* was: 'It's excellent!' but then we Glaswegians are noted for our directness.

Of course, I know that the likelihood of your publishing this letter in any shape or form, let alone publishing it with its contents virtually intact or giving it the same prominence as your report is about as high as your making friends and influencing people – when did you ever publish any critical comment?

**Jack Jaffé**

Games For Pleasure  
London N12 8PY

*Talking of checking facts: we are distributed nationally in the UK by Diamond Europress, in Germany by Welt der Spiel and in the US by Capital City Distribution. We'll let our readers make up their own minds about the rest of your tirade.*

### Off the ball

Sniper should get his facts right: I said that I thought Subbuteo was the capital of *Paraguay*, not *Uruguay*, as stated in your last issue.

**Kate Roscoe**

London W9.

Sorry.

GI

# Free classifieds

## SMALL ADS

**WANTED:** Games enthusiasts, especially wargames and strategy games. Over 20 yrs only please. Based in Hinckley, Leicestershire. ☎ 0445 615995.

**WANTED URGENTLY,** a copy of board game *Kensington* to buy. Let me know your price. Rebecca Johnson, Japonica Cottage, Norton Fitzwarren, Taunton, Somerset TA2 6QS. ☎ 0823 286937 evenings and weekends.

**ATTENTION USA!** Wanted: *Starfall* (Yaquinto), willing to buy or exchange for any German game. Hans Reinhold, Wiesenkamp 12, 3045 Bispingen, West Germany.

**GERMAN GAMES COLLECTOR** wants to buy/exchange general and sports games. Dr K Rehders, Walldorfer Str 1, D6000 Frankfurt 70.

**WANTED:** Games enthusiasts, Bournemouth area. Prefer strategy games but anything interesting considered. Possibility of forming club. Please contact John Johnstone, 18 Hood Crescent, Bournemouth BH10 4DD. ☎ 0202 518245.9

### SPIELBOX

Bi-monthly German language games review magazine. Send DM 54,- (plus DM 9,80 if you want it sent air mail) for a one year – six issue – subscription to: Huss- Verlag GmbH, Joseph-Dollinger-Bogen 5, Postfach 46 04 80, D-8000 München 46, West Germany.

**WANTED:** Waddingtons *Air Charter*. Drew Shotliff, ☎ 0525 377949.

**WANTED DESPERATELY:** *Election* from Intellect Games, and other old games. Can help too. Rudolf Rühle, Burgweg 33, D5300 Bonn 1.

**COLLECTION** of over 50 games for sale – mostly board games; lots of rare titles. SAE for list to: Jim Crawford, 11 Canon Court, Nevendon, Basildon Essex.

### TRANSLATIONS NEEDED

Of the following games' rules for a forthcoming GI article: *Ordino Trall* (Hachette, French), *Kunterbunte Bimmelbahn* (Jumbo), *Auf Der Schwabischen* (Ravensburger), *Bummelbahn* (Ravensburger), *Fahr Zu Kleine Lok* (Ravensburger), *Fuzzi Heinz Und Schlendrian* (Spears) and *Strategie Auf Schlenen* (Spika, East German). Write to Alan R Moon, 15 Burnside Street, Lancaster, NH03584, USA.

**WANTED:** copies of *Mentals*, *Pagoda*, *Thought-Wave*, *Wildlife Adventure*, *Trade* and *Infinity*. Contact Paul Gabriner, Dr Koomansstraat 28, 1391 XB Abcoude, Holland.



**GO** – oriental boardgame. British Association, membership: Brian Timmins, The Hollies, Wollerton, Market Drayton, Salop TF9 3LY. ☎ 063084 292.

**POSTAL DIPLOMACY.** Interested? Send SAE to John, 92 Sandyhill Lane, Ipswich, Suffolk IP3 0JA.

**FOR SALE** – back issues of *White Dwarf*, Nos 1, 5–7, 13–73. Photocopies of missing issues available. Offers to Geoff Smith, ☎ 0602 253281.

**IS THERE** a games group on the Isle of Wight? Does anyone wish to form one? Jacob, ☎ 853517.

#### DISTRIBUTORS

and retail stockists wanted in all countries except Britain and Germany, for **Railway Rivals** maps and other games: Rostherne Games (GI), 102 Priory Road, Milford Haven SA73 2ED, UK. ☎ 06462 2752

**IMAZINE** the rolegame fanzine, currently taking an overlong 'rest' thanks to GI, back issues 16 to 20 still available. 80p per copy to Paul Mason, 19 Rusholme Road, Putney, London SW15 3JX.

**GAMES FOR SALE.** Sell off even more of the contents of my loft! If you would like a copy of my second list – the **ORANGE** one – then please send a large SAE to R E Ruck, 47 Chichester Drive East, Saltdean,

Brighton, East Sussex BN2 8AN. Nearly 150 games, covering all categories and ages.

**WANTED:** Waddingtons' *Formula One*, ASS NIKI Lauda's *Formel Eins* and Ravensburger's *Grand Prix*. Top price paid for these games and some old and new games for swap. S T Godi, 262 The Colonnades, Porchester Terrace North, London W2 6AT. ☎ 01-262 7093.

**WANTED:** *Nomad Gods* board game, *Wyrms Footnotes*, figures, other *RuneQuest* stuff to buy or borrow. I'd be pleased to hear from any *RuneQuest* fanzines, LRP sites in the West Mids or anyone really. Oh, and if anyone happens to own a large wood... ☎ 021-705 9022 evenings.

**SECONDHAND GAMES!** Bought, sold or part exchanged. Send SAE for list of over 100 games to: Jim Crawford, 11 Canon Court, Nevendon, Basildon, Essex. ☎ 0268 534002.

#### GAMES REPS

Wanted for all areas. Send cv to: Michael Callaghan, Chart Hobby Ltd, Chart House, Station Road, East Preston, Littlehampton, West Sussex BN16 3AG.

**GI REVIEWER** selling games to buy food! Old and new rolegames and supplements, plus quite a few

boardgames and wargames. Send largish SAE to James Wallis, 8 College Gardens, London N18 2XR.

**GAMES PLAYERS** wanted in the Evesham/Worcs area. *Acquire*, 1830 etc. Contact Martin Hammon, 'Benefield', Middle Lane, Pershore WR10 3LZ.

**ATTENTION!** 20 NEW games, just waiting to be marketed by the right company. Can you help? Then write to: Mr D King, All Year Round Games, 5 Syracuse Avenue, Rainham RM13 9SR, England. All offers considered.

**ECW WARGAME:** *The King's War* covering the ECW 1642–46. 44 page A4 rules booklet. 18" x 23.5" map, 7 scenarios and 9 counter sheets (you cut and paste). Already sold in excess of 700 copies. £6 post free UK (£7 surface mail) from Charles Vasey, 75 Richmond Park Road, East Sheen, London SW14 8JY.

**GAMES FOR SALE** or exchange. SAE for list. R J Hankey, 15 Watlands Road, Bignall End, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs ST7 8QQ.

**WANTED** a copy of *Stack*, published by BB Games (reviewed GI #7). Please contact P Duckworth, 75A Nags Head Road, Ponders End, Middlesex EN3 7AA. ☎ 01-443 2329 evenings.

**POSTAL DIPLOMACY** (and variants). Any budding diplomats interested contact El Gamesmaster, send SAE to 28 Feckenham Road, Astwood Bank, Redditch B96 6DN.

## GAMES CLUBS

**BEDFORD GLADIATORS** Wargaming Association caters for all kinds of rolegames and wargames and meets Mondays from 7pm to 11pm at the BUSA club, The Broadway, Bedford. Contact Dave Wilkin ☎ 0234 857394.

**BLACKROD** Wargames Society have regular fortnightly meetings. All types of games are played including historical figure wargames, fantasy rolegames and board games. New members welcome with or without any previous experience. Contact: Trains & Things, 170/172, Chorley New Road, Horwich, Nr Bolton, Lancs. ☎ 0204 669203 or 691895.

**BRITISH OTHELLO FEDERATION** organises tournaments, chooses British champions to play in world championship team, produces instructive and entertaining newsletter twice a year. Contact David Haigh, 62 Romsey Road, Winchester SO 2 5PH.

**EVERSHAM** Role-play association. Established four years. Every fortnight, any games played. Contact Paul ☎ 0386 48202.

**GAMES MEETING** every Tuesday at the Bun Shop Pub, Berrylands Rd, Surbiton. 7pm till closing time. Wide variety of board games and role-playing games.

**GLC (R.I.P.)** Wargames Club meets alternate Wednesdays and Thursdays (May 3, 11, 17, 25, 31) in room 88, County Hall, on the South Bank, SE1 (nearest tubes Embankment and Waterloo). 6.30 till 10.00pm. Miniatures, two player board wargames, *Warhammer 40k*, *Pax Britannica*, 1830, etc.

**KCPFRPG**, North London, have meetings every Monday, from 6.30pm to 9.45pm. If you're human, elf, dwarf or just about any other race, and you're between 16 and 25, then contact us straight away. We play *AD&D*, *Rolemaster/MERP*, *Marvel Superheroes*, *Robotech*, *Call of Cthulhu* and other games. Experienced and non experienced players welcome. Contact Bill, Naomi or Vince ☎ 01-253 6776. Or write to Darren Rogers, c/o KCPFRPG, 92 Central Street, London EC1V.

**NEW MALDEN & SURBITON** games group meets every other Monday at the Railway Hotel Pub, Coombe Road, New Malden, 7pm till closing time. Miniature figure wargames include *Vietnam*, *Warhammer 40K* and others. Board gamers and role-players welcome. Contact Peter ☎ 01-942 5624.

**NOTTINGHAM AND DERBY** Games Club meets every Thursday at the Queens Walk Community Centre, The Meadows, Nottingham. 7–10.30pm. Contact Mick Haytack ☎ 0332 511898.

**SIGMA GAMES CLUB** meets every 2nd, 4th, and 5th (if applicable) Sunday of the month at the Intervarsity

Club, Bedford Chambers, King St. Covent Garden, London. 3–10.30pm. Games played include *Empire Builder*, *Talisman*, *Titan*, 1830, and many more.

## USA

**EAST VALLEY** Advanced Squad Leader Club. Contact Pierce Ostrander, 5046 E Decatur St, Mesa, AZ 85205. ☎ 602 985 4505.

**HEXAGON SOCIETY** meets every first and third Saturday From 10am to 6pm. Contact James McCormack, 1450 Harmon Ave, 224c Las Vegas, NV 89119. ☎ 702 794 3523 (evenings)

**HISTORICAL SIMULATIONS SOCIETY** of Charlottesville, Virginia meets every Friday at 7pm in New Cabell Hall Rm 236. Contact Derek Croxton, 1711 Galloway Drive, Charlottesville VA 22901 ☎ 804-296 4897.

**MIAMI GAMING CLUB** seeks new members. All types of games. Meetings are once a week from 7pm to 11pm, Thurs or Fri at 7200 SW 7th St Miami. Contact Rex ☎ 264 9752, or Steve ☎ 271 5418.

**NEW ORLEANS GAMES CLUB** seeks players for all kinds of games. Contact Greg Schloesser, 3800 Briant Drive, Marrero, LA 70072. ☎ 504 347 7145.

**NORTH SHORE GAMES CLUB** meets once a month somewhere in Massachusetts. Tournaments, food, and even a newsletter.

**PENN-JERSEY GAMERS** meet monthly and play most games, but no role-playing. Newsletter, tournaments, raffles. Contact Jim Vroom, 2290 Galloway Rd, A-23, Bensalem, PA 19020.

**SANTA FE SPRINGS GAMERS ASSOC.** looking for new members to play boardgames and Role-Playing games. Tues/Thurs 5–9pm. Saturdays 9am–5pm. at the Town Centre Hall, 11740 E Telegraph Rd, Santa Fe Springs, CA. ☎ 213 863 4896 (club hours only).

**SCHENECTADY WARGAMES ASSOCIATION:** regular meetings and weekend conventions, tournaments of *AxIs & Allies*, *Empire Builder*, *Machiavelli*. Role-playing too. Contact: Eric Paperman, 418 Vliet Blvd. Cohoes, NY 12047. ☎ 581 237 5874.

**WASHINGTON GAMERS ASSOC.** meets monthly, and publishes a bimonthly newsletter (\$5 for six issues). Contact Dennis Wang, 2200 Huntington Ave, Alexandria, VA 22303. ☎ 703 960 1259

**WINDY CITY WARGAMERS** meet twice a month. Miniatures and board wargames, plus newsletter. Louie Tokarz, 5724 W 106th St, Chicago Ridge, IL 60415. ☎ 312 857 7060.

## CONVENTION DIARY

### UK

**WOTTACON** January 6, 1990 at Goldsmiths College, New Cross, London. A one day convention organised by the Guild of Melee and Magic. All aspects of role-playing covered, trade stands, competitions etc. Advance tickets £2.50 from The Guild of Melee and Magic, 127 Queen Adelaide Court, Penge, London SE20 7EB.

**SENTINEL 90** April 8, 1990 at the King's Hall, Stoke-on-Trent. Wargames and rolegames, trade stalls, participation games and competitions, bring and buy. Organised by the Stoke Wargames Group.

**CAMPAIGN 90.** May 12–13, 1990 at Woughton Campus, Milton Keynes. *Warhammer*, *Warhammer 40K* and *Blood Bowl* championships. Contact M A Kay, 117 St Johns Road, Bletchley, Milton Keynes MK3 5DZ.

**CONJUNCTION.** July 27–29, July 1990 at New Hall College, Cambridge. Relaxed rolegame convention organised like an SF con rather than a selling exercise. £12 attending, B&B £21.50, £5 supporting. Contact Conjunction, c/o 25 Wycliffe Road, Cambridge CB1 3JD.

**ARENA 90.** August 25 1990 at the Addison Centre, Addison Park, Kempston, Beds. Wargames and role-playing convention organised by the Bedford Gladiators in association with the Kempston Fun Day and Kempston Lions and Bedfordshire County Council. Wargames, trade stands, role-playing, boardgames, bring and buy and painting competitions. Admission £2, under 14 £1. For further detail, contact Dave Wilkin, ☎ 0234 857394 or Ian Fellows, ☎ 0234 261254.

**MINDGAMES 90** November 10 and 11, 1990 at the Novotel in Hammersmith. An international showcase for all types of gaming. Contact Simon Titley/Bridget Seddon, Waltham Business Services, 105a Queen Street, Maidenhead, Berks SL6 1LR. ☎ 0628 770676.

## NORTH AMERICA

**DIP-CON XXII.** America's biggest Diplomacy tournament. For further details contact Larry Peery, PO Box 8416, San Diego CA 92102 USA. ☎ 619 295 6248. Iain Bowen, 2 Elderberry Close, Norton, Stourbridge, West Midlands DY8 3JN is organising details for UK Dip fans who want to attend World Dip Con.



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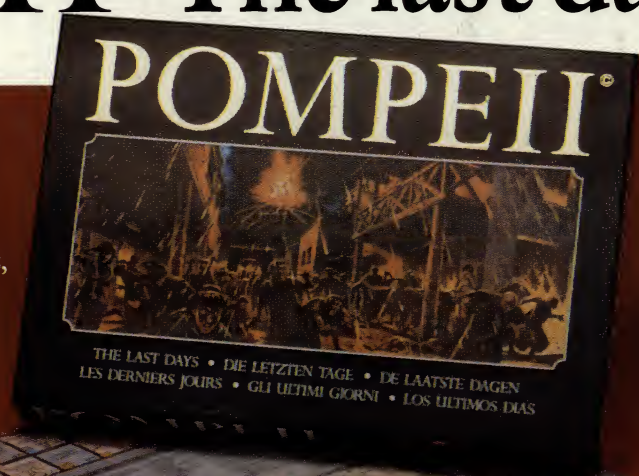
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